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DH

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B'desh belongs to all faiths: Ex-PM's son

Tarique Rahman returns to country after 17 yrs in exile

DHAKA, PTI

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) acting chairman Tarique Rahman on Thursday urged people to maintain peace as he presented a vision of an inclusive society, saying the country belongs to people of all faiths, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians.

Rahman's remarks in his first address to party supporters after arriving in Dhaka for the first time in 17 years came as minorities, especially Hindus, have been affected by a series of incidents against them in Bangladesh since the interim government assumed power in August last year.

"The time has come for all of us to build the country together. This country belongs to people of the hills and the plains, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. We want to build a safe Bangladesh, where every woman, man, and child can leave home and return safely," he told thousands of supporters gathered at the July 36 Expressway in the capital, where he went straight after arriving at the airport.

Former PM Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, who is emerging as a leading contender for prime ministership, addresses supporters in Dhaka. AFP

> This country belongs to people of the hills and the plains, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. We want to build a safe Bangladesh, where every woman, man, and child can leave home and return safely
>
> **TARIQUE RAHMAN**
> Acting Chairman, Bangladesh Nationalist Party

The Hindu population in Bangladesh has been affected by a series of incidents against minority communities in the country after the ouster of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August last year. Recently, a 25-year-old Hindu worker was lynched by a mob in Mymensingh city.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh.

▸ Bangladesh, Page 6

Hindu man lynched

A Hindu man was lynched in Bangladesh over alleged extortion, media reports said on Thursday, days after another man from the minority religion was lynched in the country. The incident took place on Wednesday.
Details on Page 11

Sharavathi project gets boost; state OKs mitigation framework

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

In a big boost to the controversial power project proposed in the Sharavathi Valley Lion Tailed Macaque (LTM) Sanctuary, Karnataka has approved the framework for a wildlife mitigation plan even as the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has embarked on a site visit to understand the impact of works in the fragile area.

DH has a copy of the framework and the recommendation letter written to the government by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden P C Ray.

Proposed by the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL), the 2,000 MW pumped storage project involves generating power by building an underground powerhouse between Talakalale and Gerusoppa dams. Of the 352.77 acres sought for the project, 131.81 acres is reserved forest.

Being situated in a sanctuary, a protected area, the proposal requires approval from state and central wildlife authorities.

▸ Sharavathi, Page 6

6 die in Chitradurga bus-truck crash; most victims burnt alive

Bus gutted in collision after truck jumps median

NRUPATHUNGA S K
CHITRADURGA, DHNS

At least six people were burnt alive when a non-AC sleeper bus caught fire after colliding with a 14-wheeler container truck on NH-48 near Gorladaku cross at Javanagondanahalli village in Hiriyur taluk of Chitradurga district in the early hours of Thursday.

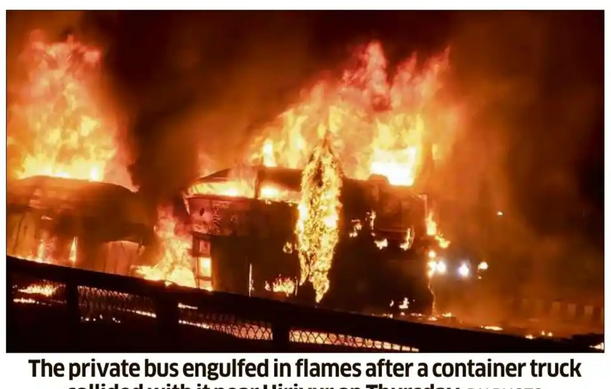
The container truck, moving towards Bengaluru, hit a divider and collided head-on with the bus which was going from Bengaluru to Gokarna.

The bus burst into flames and was reduced to ashes in minutes as the truck hit the diesel tank of the bus. The victims, who were asleep, were unable to escape and were charred to death. The toll could have gone up had it been an airconditioned bus, the police said.

The bus was carrying 32 people, including the driver and conductor. Six bodies have been identified.

According to the police, Bindu (28) from Bengaluru, her daughter Greya (5), Manasa (26), Navya (27) from Channarayapatna in Hassan district and Rashmi (25) from Bhatkal in Uttara Kannada district were burnt alive.

▸ Bus-truck crash, Page 4
More reports, Page 4



The private bus engulfed in flames after a container truck collided with it near Hiriyur on Thursday. DH PHOTO

'Glad it was a non-AC bus'

A vacation to Gokarna turned tragic as a bus travelling to the beach town from Bengaluru went up in flames in Chitradurga on Thursday. Passengers DH spoke to were grateful for having booked a non-AC bus, as they jumped out the windows in time.
Details on Page 4

Exports to miss $1 tn target despite FTA push

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's total exports, merchandise and services combined, are likely to remain at around $850 billion in the current financial year, falling well short of Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's target of $1 trillion, despite push for free trade deals with multiple countries.

Goods exports, which stood at $438 billion in 2024-25, are expected to remain flat in the current fiscal due to weak global demand and US tariffs. However, services exports are likely to inch past $400 billion in 2025-26 from $387 billion in the previous year.

Details on Page 12

Maoist leader with Rs 1.1 cr bounty killed in Odisha gunfight

BHUBANESWAR, PTI: Top Maoist leader Ganesh Uike, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.1 crore on his head, was among six red rebels killed in gun battles with security forces in Odisha's Kandhamal district, police said on Thursday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah called it a "major breakthrough", while Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi described it as a "remarkable success" to build a Naxal-free India. CPI(Maoist) central committee member Uike was the chief of the banned outfit in Odisha.

'Uike's death blow to Maoists'

"Uike's death has broken the backbone of Maoist activities in Odisha," Odisha DGP Y B Khurania told reporters.

Uike was heading the banned outfit in Odisha since December 2024, said Sanjeeb Panda, an ADG rank officer in-charge of anti-Naxal operations in the state.

Details on Page 10

Cylinder filling gas balloons bursts near Mysuru Palace, 1 killed, 4 hurt

MYSURU, DHNS: A balloon seller was killed and four people were injured when a cylinder from which he was filling balloons with helium gas exploded at the Jayamarthanda gate of Mysuru Palace around 8.30 pm on Thursday evening.

The balloon seller has been identified as Saleem (40).

Among the injured are Begaluru-based Lakshmi, who suffered grievous injuries and is critical. Nanjangud-based Manjula, Shahina Shaber of Kolkata and Kotreshi from Renebennur, who was vacationing with his wife Priyanka and children, are the other injured, according to Mysuru city police commissioner Seema Latkar.

The injured have been shifted to K R Hospital for treartment.

The incident is said to have occurred when the balloon vendor was filling gas into balloons from the cylinder.

A large number of people had gathered at the palace premises on a Christmas holiday and to see the flower show and cultural events.

'Pak got 20 Chinese 4th gen fighters in 5 yrs'

NEW DELHI, DHNS: China has supplied 20 fourth generation J-10C fighter jets to Pakistan in the last five years and will supply another 16 of them according to an agreement between the two nations, Pentagon's latest report on the military and security developments involving China states.

The delivery of J-10C combat jets is Beijing's only export of these fighter aircraft, the report says, noting that China also considers setting up bases in Pakistan and Bangladesh along with a few other countries in Africa and Asia as the People's Liberation Army looks at additional military facilities to support air and naval projections.

"Besides Pakistan, China has likely also considered basing in Angola, Bangladesh, Burma, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates, and Vanuatu," said the report placed before the United States Congress.

▸ Fighter jets, Page 6

CHRISTMAS FEVER

Christmas spirit took over as large crowds thronged Brigade Road and Church Street in Bengaluru on Thursday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

See Page 3

Right-wing activists disrupt Christmas celebrations

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Right-wing activists on Thursday disrupted Christmas celebrations in some parts of the country even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended a Christmas morning service at a church here along with a large congregation of Christians of Delhi and north India.

In Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, Bajrang Dal leaders gathered in front of outside St Alphonsus Cathedral Church in the Cantonment area and recited 'Hanuman Chalisa'.

In Rajasthan's Nagaur district, the principal of a private school alleged that a group of people claiming to be Bajrang Dal members threatened children and staff over Christmas celebrations on Thursday.

Details on Page 7

Unnao case order: 2 women lawyers move SC

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Two women lawyers on Thursday approached the Supreme Court, challenging the Delhi High Court's December 23 order granting bail to former UP MLA Kuldeep Senger in the 2017 Unnao rape case by suspending his life sentence, pending his appeal against the conviction.

Petitioners Anjali Patel and Pooja Shilpkar claimed the high court granted relief to the expelled BJP MLA without considering the true facts of the case that the trial court not only convicted him and awarded him the life imprisonment but also made an observation that he must serve judicial custody till the rest of his natural life.

Details on Page 7

IN FOND MEMORY

Dr. Shamanur Shivashankarappa

President, KPCF and Founder President, KUPECA

Demise: 14th December 2025.

A distinguished parliamentarian, respected educationist, philanthropist, and community leader, he served as Member of the 12th Lok Sabha, MLA from Davangere South, Treasurer, KPCC, Member, AICC, and Honorary Secretary, Bapuji Educational Association since 1972. He guided 55 educational institutions and held leadership roles in several medical, dental, and engineering bodies. He was also President, Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Mahasabha.

Recipient of the Paul Harris Fellow Award and Honorary D.Litt., he leaves behind a legacy of service and compassion. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

Office Bearers and Members of

Karnataka Professional Colleges Foundation (KPCF)
Karnataka Unaided Private
Engineering Colleges Association (KUPECA)

TRUE BREW

Think herbal tea is chai? Govt regulator begs to differ

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

What's in a name? For the Indian food regulator, nomenclature, it seems, means a lot.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has ruled that only products sourced from tea plants (Camellia sinensis) including Kangra tea, and green tea should be branded and sold as tea. No other infusions can carry such a name tag.

With herbal tea, jasmine tea, rooibos tea and flower tea being sold in stores and online, FSSAI says herbal infusions or blends, which are not derived from Camellia sinensis do not qualify to be named as tea. Such naming, it says, will be considered "misbranding".

TEA TAG

- Only products sourced from tea plants including Kangra tea, and green tea should be branded and sold as tea
- Herbal infusions or blends, which are not derived from Camellia sinensis do not qualify to be named as tea
- The only other product that can retain tea in its name is the instant tea mix in solid form

The only other product that can retain tea in its name is the instant tea mix in solid form, says the FSSAI order targeted towards food business operators including e-commerce platforms engaged in manufacturing, packing, marketing, import or sale of such products.

The Commissioners of Food Safety of all states and Union Territories and Regional Directors, FSSAI have been asked to monitor and ensure strict adherence to the provisions.

Non-compliance will invite action according to provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and its rules and regulations, it said in the December 24 order.

This is the second time in recent months that FSSAI has red-flagged misbranding of food items. In October, the regulator issued an order to stop using the term "ORS" in the trademarked name or in the naming of any food product such as fruit-based, non-carbonated or ready-to-drink beverages.

This was done to avoid confusion with the World Health Organisation approved oral rehydration salt, which is a life-saving medical product, particularly for children and to prevent sale of fake, sugar-heavy items branded as ORSL.

Last month, the regulator wrote to food commissioners in states and UTs for "immediate removal of misleading and deceptively" named fruit-based beverages, ready to serve drinks, electrolyte drinks and energy drinks being sold in the brand/product name containing terms 'ORS' from retail outlets and e-commerce platforms.

ಬಾಪೂಜಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆ (ರಿ)

2ನೇ ಮುಖ್ಯ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಪಿ.ಜೆ.ಬಡಾವಣೆ, ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ–577002

ಶಿವಗಣಾರಾಧನೆ ಮತ್ತು ನುಡಿ ನಮನ

ಐವತ್ತು ವರ್ಷಗಳಿಗೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಕಾಲ ದಾವಣಗೆರೆಯ ಬಾಪೂಜಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಗೌರವ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳಾಗಿ
ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಯಶಸ್ವಿಯಾಗಿ ಮುನ್ನಡೆಸಿದ ಅಮೃತ ಪುರುಷರು, ಶತಮಾನ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠರು,
ಅಖಿಲ ಭಾರತ ವೀರಶೈವ–ಲಿಂಗಾಯತ ಮಹಾಸಭಾದ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಮಾಜಿ ಸಚಿವರು, ಶಾಸಕರೂ ಆದ

ಲಂ. ಡಾ. ಶಾಮನೂರು ಶಿವಶಂಕರಪ್ಪ ಅವರು

ದಿ. 14.12.2025ರಂದು ನಮ್ಮೆಲ್ಲರನ್ನು ಅಗಲಿದ್ದು, ಅವರ **ಶಿವಗಣಾರಾಧನೆ ಮತ್ತು ನುಡಿ ನಮನ** ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು
ದಿ. 26.12.2025ರ ಶುಕ್ರವಾರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 10.15ಕ್ಕೆ ಹಮ್ಮಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗಿದೆ. ದಾವಣಗೆರೆಯ ಬಂಬೂಬಜಾರ್ ಮುಖ್ಯ ರಸ್ತೆಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಶ್ರೀ ಕಲ್ಲೇಶ್ವರ
ರೈಸ್ ಮಿಲ್ ಆವರಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ನೆರವೇರಲಿದ್ದು, ತಾವುಗಳೆಲ್ಲರು ಆಗಮಿಸಿ ಲಿಂಗೈಕ್ಯರ ಆತ್ಮಕ್ಕೆ ಚಿರಶಾಂತಿ ಕೋರಲು ವಿನಂತಿಸುತ್ತೇವೆ.

ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಜಂಟಿ ಗೌರವ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳು, ಖಜಾಂಚಿ, ಆಡಳಿತ ಮಂಡಳಿ ಸದಸ್ಯರು, **ಬಾಪೂಜ ವಿದ್ಯಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆ**
ಮತ್ತು ಬಾಪೂಜಿ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕ್‌ನ ಹಾಗೂ ಶಾಮನೂರು ಒಡೆತನದ ಸಮೂಹ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ಎಲ್ಲ ಅಂಗ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ನೌಕರ ವರ್ಗ, ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ

ಭಾವಪೂರ್ಣ ಗೌರವ ಶ್ರದ್ಧಾಂಜಲಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವವರು

ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಪ್ರೀತಿ ಬಕ್ಕೇಶ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಶ್ರೀ ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್. ಬಕ್ಕೇಶ್, ಆಶಿಕ್, ಅಕ್ಷತಾ, ಅದಿತ್
ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ರೇಖಾ ಗಣೇಶ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಶ್ರೀ ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್. ಗಣೇಶ್, ಅಭಿಜಿತ್, ಆಂಚಲ್, ಅಖಿಲಾ
ಡಾ॥ ಪ್ರಭಾ ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಶ್ರೀ ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್. ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ್, ಸಮರ್ಥ್, ಡಾ॥ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠಾ, ಶಿವ

ಪಂಚ ಪೀಠಾಧೀಶ್ವರರೂ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ನಾಡಿನ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಮಠಾಧೀಶರು, ಹರ, ಗುರು, ಚರ ಮೂರ್ತಿಗಳು ದಿವ್ಯ ಸಾನ್ನಿಧ್ಯ ವಹಿಸುವರು

ಉದ್ಘಾಟನೆ:
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ ಖರ್ಗೆ
ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಭಾರತ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಕಾಂಗ್ರೆಸ್

ಪುತ್ಥಳಿ ಅನಾವರಣ:
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಸಿದ್ದರಾಮಯ್ಯ
ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಸಾಕ್ಷ್ಯಚಿತ್ರ ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ :
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಡಿ.ಕೆ. ಶಿವಕುಮಾರ್
ಉಪಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಸಿ.ಸಿ.

ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷತೆ:
ನ್ಯಾ. ಶಿವರಾಜ್ ಪಾಟೀಲ್
ನಿವೃತ್ತ ನ್ಯಾಯಾಧೀಶರು, ಸರ್ವೋಚ್ಚ ನ್ಯಾಯಾಲಯ

–: ಸ್ವಾಗತ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಾಸ್ತಾವಿಕ ನುಡಿ :–

ಶ್ರೀ ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್. ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ್
ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಉಸ್ತುವಾರಿ
ಸಚಿವರು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಡಾ॥ ಪ್ರಭಾ ಮಲ್ಲಿಕಾರ್ಜುನ್
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಸಂಸದರು,
ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಲೋಕಸಭಾ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರ

ಕಿರು ಹೊತ್ತಿಗೆ ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ

ಶ್ರೀ ಹೆಚ್.ಡಿ.ದೇವೇಗೌಡ
ಮಾಜಿ ಪ್ರಧಾನಿಗಳು,
ಭಾರತ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

–: ವಂದನಾರ್ಪಣೆ :–

ಶ್ರೀ ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್. ಗಣೇಶ್
ಉದ್ಯಮಿಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು,
ಅ.ಭಾ.ವೀ.ಲಿಂ. ಮಹಾಸಭಾ

ನುಡಿ ನಮನ

ಶ್ರೀ ಬಿ.ಎಸ್.ಯಡಿಯೂರಪ್ಪ
ಮಾಜಿ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು

ಶ್ರೀ ವೇಣುಗೋಪಾಲ್
ಪ್ರಧಾನ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿ, ಎಐಸಿಸಿ

ಶ್ರೀ ಜಗದೀಶ್ ಶೆಟ್ಟರ್
ಸಂಸದರು, ಮಾಜಿ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು

ಶ್ರೀ ಹೆಚ್.ಡಿ.ಕುಮಾರಸ್ವಾಮಿ
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸಚಿವರು, ಮಾಜಿ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು

ಶ್ರೀ ಬಸವರಾಜ ಬೊಮ್ಮಾಯಿ
ಸಂಸದರು, ಮಾಜಿ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು

ಶ್ರೀ ವಿ.ಸೋಮಣ್ಣ
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸಚಿವರು, ಭಾರತ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಶ್ರೀ ಯು.ಟಿ.ಖಾದರ್
ಸಭಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿಧಾನಸಭೆ

ಶ್ರೀ ರಣದೀಪ್ ಸುರ್ಜೆವಾಲಾ
ಪ್ರಧಾನ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿ, ಎಐಸಿಸಿ

ಶ್ರೀ ಈಶ್ವರ ಬಿ ಖಂಡ್ರೆ, ಸಚಿವರು
ಹಿರಿಯ ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಅ.ಭಾ.ವೀ.ಲಿಂ.ಮ

ಶ್ರೀ ಎಂ.ಬಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್, ಸಚಿವರು
ಬೃಹತ್ ಮತ್ತು ಮಧ್ಯಮ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆ ಇಲಾಖೆ

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಮಾಜಿ ಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಮಾಜಿ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಶಾಸಕರು, ವಿಧಾನ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಸದಸ್ಯರು, ನಿಗಮ-ಮಂಡಳಿ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಅಖಿಲ ಭಾರತ ವೀರಶೈವ-ಲಿಂಗಾಯತ ಮಹಾಸಭಾದ ಮುಖಂಡರುಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಪಕ್ಷಗಳ ಮುಖಂಡರು ನುಡಿನಮನ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಅತಿಥಿಗಳಾಗಿ ಪಾಲ್ಗೊಳ್ಳುವರು.

ವಿ.ಸೂ: ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಆಹ್ವಾನ ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಎಲ್ಲರಿಗೂ ತಲುಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ತಲುಪದೆ ಇದ್ದವರು ಇದನ್ನೇ ಆಹ್ವಾನವೆಂದು ತಿಳಿದು ಆಗಮಿಸಬೇಕಾಗಿ ವಿನಂತಿ

Ministry of Rural Development
Government of India
All-weather roads to every village
Under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in last 11.5 years
82,000+ roads of total length 4.06 lakh Kms have been constructed
Nation Building through Rural Development
cbc 35101/13/0044/2526
Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
25

Commuters rejoice as Hebbal flyover's city-bound loop cuts commute time by 25%

Concerns about bottleneck shifting towards Mehkri Circle

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

For thousands of vehicle users who have long considered the Hebbal flyover a notorious bottleneck, the last four days have brought an unexpected New Year gift.

Following the opening of the second newly-constructed loop on a trial basis on December 20, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and traffic police report a 25% reduction in peak-hour congestion.

The new two-lane loop, which allows vehicles from Yelahanka, Jakkur and the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) to bypass the main flyover bottleneck and head directly toward Mehkri Circle, has altered the junction's chaotic merging patterns.

The new two-lane loop (left) allows vehicles from Yelahanka, Jakkur and the airport to head directly towards Mehkri Circle. DH PHOTO/MS MANJUNATH

Commuters relieved

"It used to take me 45 minutes just to cross the 1-km stretch from Esteem Mall to the flyover's descent," Ramesh K, a techie and daily commuter, told *DH*. "This morning, I zipped through in under five minutes."

Residents say the opening of this loop, coupled with the Nagawara-to-Mehkri ramp commissioned in August, has finally addressed the structural bottleneck where seven lanes used to converge into two.

Perhaps the biggest beneficiaries are the city's cab drivers, for whom Hebbal has been a nightmare of traffic.

The trial phase

"Earlier, if I had an airport drop followed by a city pick-up, I would lose nearly an hour at this junction alone," cab drivers say. "Now, the flow is continuous. We don't have to wait for the traffic police to manually signal us to merge with the airport traffic. It's a straight run."

Jayaprakash, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic, North), noted that while the initial data is promising, the trial will continue through the New Year.

"It's just been four days and we are already seeing a 25% drop in congestion. However, we need another week of observation to see how the traffic redistributes, especially at Mehkri Circle," he said.

Despite the success, experts warn of a "bottleneck shift."

While Hebbal has cleared up, the tail-back at Mehkri Circle has reportedly increased, with traffic sometimes reaching Baptist Hospital. The BDA is currently eyeing a free-left turn at Mehkri Circle to further ease the pressure.

Workshop on rod puppet costuming

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** A workshop on design and costuming of Hasya characters for rod puppets of Karnataka will be conducted from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm on December 26, 27 and 28 by Gayatri Rao, an expert in the field.

The workshop includes costume ideation, stitching, jewellery design and foiling. On Sunday, there will be a rod puppet playing workshop by Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Dattatreya Aralikatte. Entry is free.

Venue is Mandala Cultural Centre, near Silk Institute Metro Station, Kanakapura Road. Call 9886193999.

Govt plans RRTS connecting satellite towns around Bengaluru

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has said that the state government is keen to develop the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) connecting satellite towns around Bengaluru and sought approval for the project from the Centre.

Shivakumar, who met Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar here on Tuesday, said that he has requested the Union minister to expedite the approval for the project.

Shivakumar told *DH* that the state government plans to develop RRTS corridors between Bidadi-Mysuru, Harohalli-Kanakapura, Nelamangala-Tumakuru, the airport-Chikkaballapur route, and Hoskote-Kolar. Since the government is working on developing these cities as satellite towns to ease congestion in Bengaluru, the RRTS project will support this plan, he added. The Union minister has promised to look into our appeal, Shivakumar said.

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), which developed Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS, also called Namo Bharat, has already submitted a proposal to the government to construct four semi-high-speed corridors from Bengaluru to boost regional connectivity: Bengaluru-Hoskote-Kolar (65 km), Bengaluru-Mysuru (145 km), Bengaluru-Tumakuru (60 km), and Bengaluru-Hosur-Krishnagiri-Dharmapuri (138 km, extending into Tamil Nadu).

The average speed of trains on this network will be 85 km/hour. While the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru will be 1.40 hours, the train will take 42 minutes to cover the Bengaluru-Tumakuru distance, according to the proposal.

The NCRTC has also expressed its willingness to prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) and execute and operate these corridors. The state government has agreed to this, sources said.

A team of officials from Karnataka visited the NCRTC headquarters recently and held discussions. The team also visited India's first rapid rail corridor, Sarai Kale Khan (Delhi) to Meerut (Uttar Pradesh), and personally saw the system.

The NCRTC has offered a similar equity for the joint venture for Karnataka on the model of the Delhi–Meerut corridor, which has 60% funding from multilateral agencies, 20% funding each from the Government of India and the state government.

Namo Bharat is India's first RRTS, with maximum operational speeds of up to 160 kmph, offering a fast, comfortable, reliable and safe mode of transport.

This system is different from the conventional railway as it does not operate on a fixed timetable or require a seat reservation. It is also different from the metro transit as it caters to passengers travelling relatively longer distances with fewer stops and at a higher speed.

"NCRTC also suggested planning TOD (transit-oriented development) around the proposed corridors to support structured urban growth and decongest Bengaluru," the sources said.

AI Exp flight links B'luru with NMIA

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** With the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) open for operations, Air India Express has launched flights from Bengaluru to the new airport and vice versa. The low-cost carrier launched a daily flight between Kempegowda International Airport and NMIA on December 25. The daily flight will take off from Bengaluru at 6 am and land at Navi Mumbai at 8.55 am.

CAROLS, CHANTS & CHARITY

Zing in the air as city rings the jingle bells

BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengalureans marked Christmas with fervour, as the faithful across age groups attended churches to observe the festival.

From early morning prayers to midnight masses, the city witnessed steady footfall throughout the day.

Major churches, including St Mary's Basilica, St Patrick's Church, Holy Trinity Church and Infant Jesus Shrine conducted special services, novenas and midnight masses.

Church authorities made additional arrangements to manage crowds, including extended service timings, volunteer support and coordination with local police for traffic and security management. In the days leading up to Christmas, several churches also organised charity initiatives, including food distribution, clothing drives and outreach programmes for underprivileged communities.

The faithful offer prayers on the occasion of Christmas at Infant Jesus church at Viveknagar on Thursday. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Commercial areas across the city reflected the festive mood. Markets such as Commercial Street, Brigade Road and Shivajinagar saw increased footfall, particularly for Christmas decorations, apparel and gifts.

Vendors selling stars, lights and festive accessories reported brisk sales, while shopkeepers noted steady demand rather than last-minute rushes.

Bakeries remained central to Christmas preparations, with many beginning production weeks in advance to meet seasonal demand. Traditional items such as plum cakes, rose cookies, kalkals and marzipan continued to be popular. Home bakers also reported a rise in custom orders this year.

Cafés and restaurants across neighbourhoods introduced special Christmas menus and hosted carol evenings, drawing families and young crowds.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Bengaluru South District PU College Principals' Association: Consultation meeting; Mangala Mantapa, NMKRV PU College, Jayanagar; 9.30 am.

A B Patil Abhinandana Samiti: Release of book 'Ashokavruksha'; Town Hall, JC Road; 10 am.

CULTURAL

Shantala Arts Trust and Surya Performing Arts: Bharatanatya by Aditya Subramanyam, Sheela Srinivas, Meera Ratnagiri; Seva Sadana, Malleshwaram; 6 pm.

ADA Rangamandira: Bharanatya rangapravesha by Shravya Kumar; ADA Rangamandira, JC Road; 6.30 pm.

Surabharati: Puppet show by Ravindra Narahari; Surabharati, HRBR Layout; 6.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Mist
TEMPERATURES

Maximum	27.7°C
Minimum	15.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	56%
Sunset (Dec 26)	6:00 pm
Sunrise (Dec 27)	6:39 am
Moonrise	10:33 am
Moonset	10:35 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works: **a) Tender No.:EL/CON/513. b) Name of the work:** Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of VRF Air Conditioning System, Internal Electrical Works and Associated Power Infrastructure for Indoor Stadium at CLW Township. **c) Contract Type:** Works. **d)Tender Value (GST inclusive) (Rupees):** ₹ 1,99,92,700.36/- (Rupees One Crore Ninety-Nine Lakhs Ninety-Two Thousand Seven Hundred and Paise Thirty-Six Only). **e) Cost of tender Document (Rupees):**Not Applicable. **f) Earnest Money(Rupees):**₹ 2,50,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Fifty Thousand only). **g) Period of completion (In Months):** 06(Six Months). **h) Date of closing: 09.01.2026 at 15:00hrs. Note:** Complete details can be seen on the Railway's website **www.ireps.gov.in.**

PR5/269 **SEE/M/CLW/ Chittaranjan**

visit us on:www.facebook.com/clwrailways

PUBLIC NOTICE

Our client is desirous of acquiring all that piece and parcel of immovable property residential site bearing Municipal No. 404/A situated at 3rd Block, Koramangala, Bangalore presently bearing E-PID No. 3028245953, 68002-Koramangala 3rd Block, Bangalore measuring East to West 80 Feet and North to South 120 feet together in all measuring about 9,600 square feet along with the building standing thereon measuring about 3296.997 square feet, more fully set out in the schedule below and hereinafter referred to as the "**Schedule Property**", from its present owners, Jyothi Krishnan and Dr. R. Gopala Krishnan, both residing at Flat No. G-04, G Block, "**ESTEEM ROYALE**", No.11, Nityananda Ashrama Road, Ejipura, Bangalore- 560 017.

Any person or persons asserting any rights, title, interest or claim in the Schedule Property or any part thereof in any manner or having any claim against the Schedule Property or the documents thereof or against the owners or objecting to such transaction in favor of our clients should write to the undersigned within **fifteen (15) days** of the issuance of this Public Notice with all documentary proof on which they are basing and asserting their rights with regards to the Schedule Property or any part thereof, after which period my client shall proceed on the basis that there are no claims of whatsoever nature with regards to the Schedule Property.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of residential site bearing Municipal No. 404/A situated at 3rd Block, Koramangala, Bangalore presently bearing E-PID NO. 3028245953, 68002-Koramangala 3rd Block, Bangalore measuring East to West 80 Feet and North to South 120 feet together in all measuring about 9,600 square feet along with the building standing thereon measuring about 3296.997 square feet and bounded as follows: EAST: Property bearing No. 404 belonging to SGK Investment Trust; WEST: Property bearing No. 403 belonging to owners of Apartment "Milford Terrace"; NORTH: Road and SOUTH: Property bearing No.363/A belonging to SGK Investment Trust.

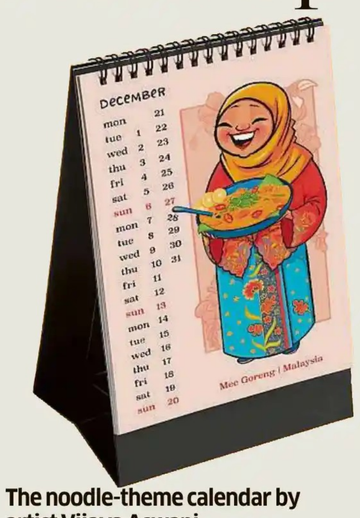
Sd/- (R.Sunitha), Advocate,
CMS INDUSLAW
#101, 1st Floor, Embassy Classic,
#11 Vittal Mallya Road,Bengaluru-560001
Phone: +91 80 40726600

IN FOND MEMORY OF
Dr. SHAMANURU SHIVASHANKARAPPA
1931 - 2025
With profound sorrow, we mourn the sad demise of Sri Shamanuru Shivashankarappa, a distinguished educationist and an eminent contributor to society.
His invaluable service, guidance, and support in many ways touched countless lives. He was a guiding light to all of us, and his remarkable contributions to society will be remembered with deep respect and gratitude.
May his noble soul rest in eternal peace.
In Remembrance
EAST POINT
Schools | Colleges | Hospital
Chairperson
Ramadevi Venkatapathi
Trustees
Pramod Gowda
Rajiv Gowda
Staff and Students of
East Point Group of Institutions

4 whimsical tabletop calendars by B'lureans

These 2026 planners are themed on food, city life and friendship. They are priced under Rs 700

TINI SARA ANIEN
TEAM METROLIFE



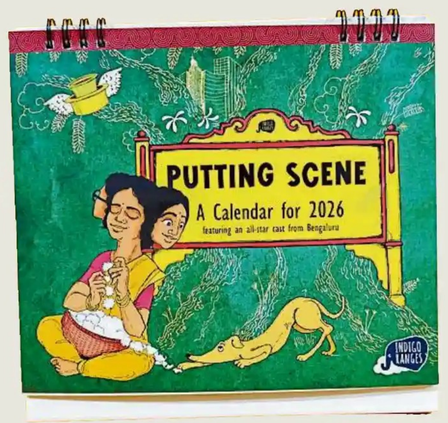
The noodle-theme calendar by artist Vijaya Aswani.

Noodle doodle
Vijaya Aswani, an artist and art teacher, has designed 'All Strings Attached', a calendar featuring illustrations of 12 noodle dishes from around the world. These include ramen, idiyappam, thukpa, mie goreng and japchae. Each illustration is paired with characters in regional outfits and other details. *Visit @spreefirit on Instagram.*

Constant companions
UX/UI designer Athreya Chidambi's calendar titled 'With A Little Help From My Friends', centres on friendship. It features characters inspired by his pets — Puglee, a pug, and Kitlee, a cat. Each illustration playfully depicts different kinds of friends in everyday situations, from the party companion to the yoga buddy and the one who keeps you disciplined. *Look up @athreyachidambi on Instagram.*

Glimpses of Bengaluru
Artist Rohit Bhasi has created 'Putting Scene — A calendar for 2026', inspired by everyday life in the city. Each month captures scenes familiar to Bengalureans — lovers in public parks, classical dance performances, festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, and portrayals of pourakarmikas, traffic policemen and transgender persons. Each artwork is accompanied by a witty story based on real people. *Visit @indigoranges on Instagram.*

Bengaluru also serves as the muse for Yogesh M, founder of The Bengalurean, an art-based platform. Each page of 'The Bengalurean 2026 calendar' features illustrations and AI-generated art linked to aspects of the city. January highlights the harvest festival Suggi Habba, February spotlights pink blossoms, and August features the Lalbagh Flower Show. *Check @the_bengalurean on Instagram.*



Rohit Bhasi captures everyday moments of Bengaluru in his 'Putting Scene' calendar.

POPCORN

Bleep story
The government stopped a film called 'Beef' from being screened at the recent international film festival in Kerala. Turns out it was about hip hop, and had nothing to do with *bleep*. Who knows what's coming up next? A ban on 'To Kill a Mockingbird' on no-meat days? And another on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' to protect our innocent citizenry from naughty thoughts?

Experts offer tips to cope with seasonal depression

It is seen frequently among youngsters battling academic and career pressure, and relationship concerns

SHRADDHA A K
TEAM METROLITE

Mental health professionals in Bengaluru have reported a nearly 60% rise in cases of seasonal depression over the past month. Also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), it is being seen more frequently among students under academic pressure, young working professionals facing career uncertainty, and individuals reflecting on unmet goals as the year draws to a close.

SAD is commonly linked to less sunlight, which can increase melatonin, the sleep hormone, and lower serotonin, the mood-regulating hormone. Vitamin D deficiency and reduced outdoor activity can worsen the symptoms.

Experts note that while Bengaluru does not experience harsh winters or prolonged periods of low sunlight, overcast days still play a role. Seasonal depression also tends to overlap with what many describe as the "year-end blues".

Child psychiatrist Arya Kumar has observed a marked rise in SAD symptoms among high school and college students. "The pressure of entrance exams such as CAT, XET, and SNAP, which are held between November and January, adds immense stress," she says.

She recalls a recent case of a student who isolated himself to focus on exam preparation. "He came in with severe anxiety and depression. Cutting himself off from friends and family worsened his mental health and triggered a depressive episode," she explains.

Mala Sridara, a retired psychology professor, draws attention to the combined impact of environmental and emotional factors. "The weather discourages outdoor activity and exercise, and reduced sunlight can have a direct effect on mood," she says.

She adds that year-end introspection often deepens emotional distress. People tend to focus on goals they could not achieve, which affects their self-esteem. "While the new year brings hope, it also brings anxiety about achieving goals," she explains.

Psychological counsellor Sajan Arun P described the cases he has been seeing at this time as more of a "year-end emotional reckoning" than pure seasonal depression. "It often coincides with winter but is closely linked to how people evaluate their year," he says.

Arun says his clients range from high school students to people in their 50s. "For students, anxiety peaks after exams. Those in their 20s struggle with career instability, relationship concerns, and identity issues, often compounded by family pressure. Middle-aged clients face financial stress and midlife crises, while older adults grapple with loneliness, empty nest syndrome, fear of mortality, and grief," he explains.

Counsellor Sneha Fernandes has seen an increase in panic attacks during this period, particularly among those in their late 20s and early 30s. "The wedding season brings added pressure. Comparing themselves with their peers can make people feel left behind, triggering depressive episodes," she says.

Experts stress the importance of recognising the difference between temporary emotional lows and clinical depression, and seeking professional help when needed. Arun also cautions against self-diagnosis.

TELL-TALE SIGNS
- Unrestful sleep or waking up tired.
- Noticeable changes in appetite.
- Persistent fatigue or reduced physical capacity.
- Withdrawing from friends or social activities.
- Falling behind on daily tasks or commitments.
- Feeling irritable and sad.

(By Sajan Arun P and Sneha Fernandes)

PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

WHAT YOU CAN DO
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule.
- Eat balanced meals.
- Stay physically active.
- Take breaks from work.
- Spend time with friends and family.

PREVALENCE
According to Sneha Fernandes, about 5-6% of the global population experiences Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), while 15-20% report milder winter blues. She adds that depressive episodes are not limited to colder months and may also peak during summer. Heat can leave one irritable and unwilling to step out or socialise. Sajan Arun P adds that SAD has not been studied as extensively in India as it has been in countries with extended periods of low sunlight.

EVENTS

Comic eve
Harshit Mahawar will perform his standup comedy act 'LinkedIn Park' at The Comedy Theatre, Church Street, on December 26 and 27, 5.30 pm. Tickets online.

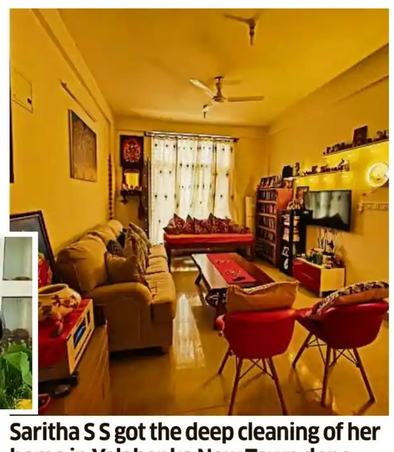
Kannada play
Rangayana Dharwad's 'Kandagalla Bharatha', directed by Prakash Garuda, will be staged on December 29, 5.30 pm at Ravindra Kalakshetra, J C Road. For tickets, call 99021 00881.

Book talk
Inez Baranay's latest novel 'Soul Climate' will be launched at Atta Galatta, Indiranagar, on December 28, 6 pm. For 16 and above. Entry free. For details, call 96325 10126.

Demand peaks for year-end cleaning

Deep cleaning tops the demand, with frequent requests for geyser repairs, carpet cleaning, and marble polishing

BARKHA KUMARI
TEAM METROLITE


Saritha S S got the deep cleaning of her home in Yelahanka New Town done recently. She says the New Year is as festive an occasion as Deepavali.

This month, many Bengalureans turned to on-demand cleaning services to prepare their homes for hosting relatives, throwing Christmas parties, and welcoming the new year. Deep cleaning was the most requested service.

Service providers say bookings typically rise during Deepavali-Dussehra, dip to normal levels in November, and increase again in December. Some see a rush for clean-up services after Christmas and New Year's Eve, following house parties.

Ganesh Dhal, a cleaning professional servicing Peenya, Jalahalli, and Nagasandra, said he was fully booked on weekends this month, handling five to six homes a day. "Most clients were preparing for Christmas, and one for a house party," he said. Their requests ranged from cleaning just the kitchen or bathroom, to the entire house.

Standup comedian Shrirupa Sengupta paid Rs 5,000 to have her 3BHK apartment off Hennur Main Road thoroughly cleaned in early December. She says booking slots becomes harder later in the month because of the surge in demand. Her year-end routine includes donating unused items, getting pest control done, followed by a deep cleaning of the house, and sometimes rearranging the furniture. She likes to end the year on a "clean and fresh" note.

Drawn by the convenience of app-based services, Saritha S S adopted the practice of December cleaning three years ago. "Like Deepavali, New Year is also a festive time, so why not clean? I also believe that 'energy flows more easily' in a clean house," said the entrepreneur and healer. She spent around Rs 6,000 and over eight hours getting her independent house in Yelahanka New Town scrubbed.

Spike up to 20%
NoBroker's home cleaning vertical registers a 20% spike in bookings towards the year-end compared to preceding months. And there has been a 35% year-on-year increase in December bookings, says CEO and cofounder Amit Agarwal.

The demand is "strong" among singles and couples aged 26 and above. There is "steady" interest coming from elderly customers living on their own. To manage the higher volume, the platform expanded its pool of service professionals by about 40%.

Apart from deep cleaning, they have seen an increase in requests for geyser (water heater) repairs, and for their 60-minute express cleaning service, which is popular before and after house parties. Agarwal said the holiday break also allows customers to stay home and supervise cleaning and maintenance work, which they otherwise postpone.

For Alpha Cleaning Services, HSR Layout, the business remains strong from Deepavali through the first week of January. Manager Pranab Kumar Nayak said the firm had fulfilled 170 bookings so far in December, and expects more following parties on Christmas and New Year's Eve.

Homecare Solutions, Domlur, recorded a 5% increase in bookings, mostly for washroom cleaning. A premium service provider saw requests for marble polishing, sofa cleaning, and carpet care in living rooms. Most of their requests came from villas and gated communities in Sarjapur, Bellandur, Whitefield, and J P Nagar.

However, one company said it has not seen its usual December uptick as there are more players in the market than before, while another said business is typically dull in the final month of the year.

Look back, look ahead: Activities to take stock

TEAM METROLITE

Book recap
'Read A Kitaab' is hosting its year-end book club meetup at Atta Galatta, Indiranagar, on December 28, from 5 pm. Over two hours, participants will reflect on the books they read in 2025 — what stayed with them, what challenged their worldviews, and what brought them comfort.

Entry free. Register on @readakitaab on Instagram.

Doodle your memories
Shruthi Anand, founder of the creative engagement initiative Artomize, will host a guided doodling workshop this Sunday. The session will help participants doodle memories from the year gone by and reflect on the year ahead. Shruthi has conducted three such workshops recently. She keeps groups small (8 to 10 participants) to encourage interaction.

On December 28, 10 am-11.30 am, at Sabha Blr, Kamaraj Road. For booking, visit @artomize on Instagram.

Create a vision board
This month, artist Simran Bansal has been helping people create vision boards for 2026. Most participants are in the 20-30 age group. A day before the workshop, participants are required to call her to discuss their goals. She then helps them curate images to match these goals, covering areas such as relationships, travel, food, clothing and fitness. On the day of the workshop, she provides art supplies including washi tape, paints, glue and glitter, which participants use to assemble their vision boards.

On December 27 and 28, 3 pm. For venue and registration, look up @artbysimranbansal on Instagram.

Simran Bansal's meetups to make a vision board for 2026 are drawing participants in the 20-30 age group.

CITY MIX

Life cycle of plastics
Ayati, a creative practitioner, will shed light on the life cycle of plastics through a guided walk-through of the ongoing 'Calorie' exhibition at Science Gallery Bengaluru, Ballari Road. With microplastics leaching into food and water, the session will raise a question: how do we balance necessity with overconsumption? The event is titled 'Create, Consume, Discard: Eating in the Age of Plastics'.

On December 28, 4 pm. Entry free. Register on calorie.scigalleryblr.org.

Hybrid art festival
Four music performances from Bengaluru will be streamed online as part of the hybrid edition of the London International Arts Festival 2025. It will feature concerts by Rudrapatnam Brothers, veena artiste R Vishweshwaran, flute, mandolin and violin trio B V Balasai, U P Raju and Dr Jyotsna Srikanth, and mridangam artistes T S Chandrashekar and A V Anand. The festival has been curated by Dr Jyotsna.

From December 28 to 31, 10.30 pm, on @DhruvLIAF on YouTube. Call 91481 24124.

Puppet play for children
Magic realism and Indo-German folk tales come together in a puppet play, meant for children above the age of six. Titled 'Tila', the play follows the funny adventures of a young trickster named Tila (means sesame). He believes he is cleverer than everyone else. As he makes fun of others, the story holds up a mirror to the world.

On December 28, 6 pm, at Ranga Shankara, J P Nagar. Tickets online.

New Year campaign on waste segregation

A social media campaign by a Bengaluru-based NGO is urging residents to adopt sustainable habits as part of their New Year's resolutions. Launched by Invaluables Bengaluru, the campaign aims to improve waste segregation and safeguard the city's informal waste pickers.

Titled 'Recycle Resolutions', the video campaign has clocked about 1.83 lakh views and 530 shares since it went live on Wednesday. It brings together three initiatives the NGO has been running since April.

'Got Old Clothes?' encourages people to dispose of unused garments responsibly. In April, informal waste pickers collected over 1.8 tonnes of clothing from 16 Dry Waste Collection Centres (DWCCs), nearly double the usual monthly volume. These workers have been repurposing the discarded textiles into fabric business cards.

'Mark It Red' urges residents to wrap and clearly label sanitary and hazardous waste to prevent injuries and infections among waste pickers.

'Wash The Dabba' asks residents to rinse and dry disposable food containers before discarding them. It makes the waste easier to recycle. An impact evaluation report found that 60% of those who were aware of the campaign adopted the practice. The workers at DWCCs observed that the containers received were cleaner than before.

'Online rescue stunts jeopardising snakes'

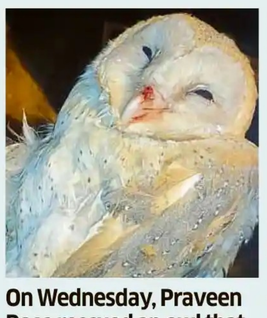
People harm owls as they are thought to be bad omens, say wildlife rescuers

ANUSHA MARY JONES
TEAM METROLITE

Wildlife rescue organisations are reporting an increase in rescue calls for owls and snakes this winter. Owls are vulnerable in the September to December period as it is their breeding season, while snakes enter human spaces to escape the cold.

The People for Wildlife (PfA) rescue and conservation centre in Sunkalpalya has recorded a 10-12% hike in such calls. Most snake rescues come from newly built gated communities in Kengeri, Yelahanka, and Vidyaranyapura. PfA's chief wildlife veterinarian, Colonel Dr Navaz Shariff, links this trend to growing food waste. "Youth heavily depend on food delivery apps and often throw away large quantities of leftovers. Poor waste disposal attracts rodents, which in turn draw snakes closer to homes," he says.

Manjha (glass-coated nylon kite string) remains a major threat to birds despite repeated awareness campaigns. Dr Shariff says owls, kites, eagles, and crows get entangled in abandoned manjha while diving for prey or resting on tree branches. During the nestling season, owls also seek shelter in high corners of houses. He says people try to harm them due to the superstition that owls are bad omens.


On Wednesday, Praveen Bose rescued an owl that was attacked by a cat near BEL Circle.

The Avian and Reptile Rehabilitation Centre, Horamavu, reported an 89% rise in calls in October for barn owls and kites trapped in manjha, compared with last year. Most cases came from Shivajinagar, Austin Town, Halasuru, and around Cubbon Park. "The extended Dussehra break led to intense kite flying. This period coincided with the breeding season of black kites," explains its lead wildlife rehabilitator Subiksha Venkatesh. Her team has also documented manjha injuries in species rarely seen before, including booted eagles, mottled wood owls, black-headed ibises, and greater cormorants.

Snake rescuer Praveen Bose is attending two to six calls daily, mostly involving rat snakes, spectacled cobras and Russell's vipers. He highlights that winter is also the breeding season for Russell's vipers. The widespread ignorance about snakes continues to put them at risk. "Influenced by social media videos, some people prod snakes with tongs or use rat glue pads to trap them. This makes the animals aggressive," he says.

THINGS TO DO
If you spot a snake or an owl in your home, avoid disturbing it or it can become hostile. Create a clear exit, such as opening a window, so it can leave on its own. Do not feed injured birds or give them water, as they may choke. Contact wildlife rescuers: PfA (080 2861 1986), ARRC (94496 42222), or Praveen Bose (78298 22133).

1,295 vehicle users booked for drunk driving in 72 hours

Traffic cops conduct special drive across the city

BENGALURU, DHNS

In a large year-end enforcement drive aimed at curbing road fatalities, the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have booked 1,295 vehicle users for driving under the influence of alcohol in 72 hours.

The special drive, conducted between December 22 and 24, saw 89,236 vehicles being flagged down across 50 traffic police stations in the city.

With the New Year festivities around the corner, the crackdown is part of the police's "zero tolerance" strategy against drunk driving.

Using a "composite naka bandi" strategy where the law and order and traffic wings work in tandem, the police set up checkpoints on major arterial roads and at sensitive junctions.

The special drive, conducted between December 22 and 24, saw 89,236 vehicles being flagged down across the city. DH FILE PHOTO

"This drive is going on. Our primary objective is to prevent road accidents during the festive week," a senior traffic police officer told *DH*. "Of the 1,295 cases registered, a significant majority were two-wheeler riders, followed by car drivers."

While the checks caused minor slowdowns at certain junctions, most drivers welcomed the strict enforcement.

"It's better to be delayed by five minutes at a checkpoint than to have a drunk driver swerving into your lane," a cab driver said.

"During the Christmas-New Year week, the city's roads become very unpredictable. Knowing the police are out there provides a sense of safety," he said.

First-time offenders face a fine of Rs 10,000 and the suspension of their driving licence for three to six months. Repeat offenders could face imprisonment.

The traffic police plan to intensify the drive on December 31, with more personnel expected to be deployed across the city to ensure a "dry and safe" transition into 2026.

Citizens confused about who's in charge of lake supervision

BENGALURU, DHNS

With the establishment of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and five municipal corporations, the supervision and development of lakes has been moved under the authority of the respective ward engineers.

This has created confusion among the public, and many do not know who to reach out to file complaints.

A JCB recently entered the Vidyaranyapura Lake area, and workers announced that the BWSSB was taking up construction and the area had to be cleared. "We did not know whom to contact then. We had to contact several officials and then even contact the BWSSB to stop the works," said Ramprasad V of the Friends of Lakes.

Similar is the case at many other lakes where regular walkers and lake activists have been struggling to reach the relevant officers to address the issues.

"There was a lot of confusion initially, and even now, there is some. We have been reaching out to the commissioner for all the issues at the lakes," said Balaji Raghotham Bali, a lake activist.

Activists said ward engineers might not be able to handle the supervision of lakes, and there was a need to change the system. "Not all officials can understand how lakes need to be handled. That requires some understanding of the ecology and the environment," Ramprasad said.

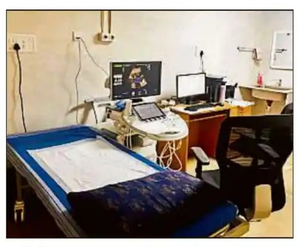
Bali pointed out that ward engineers were already burdened with a heavy workload and may find it difficult to take care of lakes.

"Also, there is a need to deal with a lot of other departments, such as the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board and the stormwater drains department, since they are closely related to lakes. Hence, we suggest that the GBA set up a centralised lakes department so that the issues are handled," he said.

Ramprasad suggested a department at each corporation could do the job.

"At the corporation level, they can constitute a department to handle parks, lakes and the greenery. This way, all environment-related activities can be monitored by one dedicated department," he said.

IGICH only govt facility to detect foetal defects



A foetal medicine scanning centre at Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Bengaluru. DH PHOTO/AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Down Syndrome and heart defects are two of the most common genetic defects detected in unborn children at Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, which established a foetal medicine branch in September.

It is the first government hospital to offer the facility, which was hitherto available only in private hospitals. It has scanned over 100 pregnant women.

The hospital also houses the Center of Excellence for Rare Diseases (COERD) in India.

Once a genetic defect is detected, parents can make informed decisions about continuing or terminating the pregnancy, doctors said.

"There are two kinds of patients. Those referred from other hospitals come here after defects are found during routine scans or blood tests. These are called soft markers. We focus on the soft makers and identify the defects," Dr Sanjeeva G N, professor for paediatrics and nodal officer for COERD, told *DH*.

"Then there are parents who have one or the other disability. If either of them has any issue, it is advised that the unborn child is checked to avoid complications".

While doctors recommend early scans to avoid complications in pregnancy terminations, some detections can only be done when the foetus grows.

"Initial scans sometimes do not show any deformities, but as the foetus grows, it is detected. We have had complications detected in 26 weeks as well," he said.

After the scans and tests, results take two to three weeks, he added. In India, abortions are allowed up to 20 weeks and 24 weeks, for women with different instances, with the approval of two doctors.

If the foetus is older than 26 weeks, pregnancy termination requires permission from Karnataka Medical Board located in Vani Vilas hospital and staffed by a gynaecologist, radiologist, paediatrician and a lawyer.

The foetal medicine branch was opened under the CSR initiative of Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited.

Newlywed tries to kill self after honeymoon, hubby booked

BENGALURU, DHNS: A newly married woman is battling for life after allegedly trying to kill herself following a quarrel with her husband during their honeymoon trip.

The 26-year-old woman had married Suraj, a private company employee, about two months ago. The couple had travelled to Sri Lanka for a 10-day honeymoon but returned to Bengaluru within five days after frequent arguments, police said. On Wednesday afternoon, the woman was found hanging at her in-laws' house in Ramamurthy Nagar. She is now on ventilator support in the ICU at a hospital.

Based on a complaint lodged by her parents, Ramamurthy Nagar police registered a case against Suraj and his family members for dowry harassment and abetment to suicide, a senior officer said. According to FIR, a grand wedding reception was organised on October 29, with woman's family reportedly spending around Rs 40 lakh. But soon after wedding, she was allegedly harassed over gold ornaments and dowry.

Central City Corporation urges citizens to adopt stray dogs

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru Central City Corporation has urged the city's animal lovers and interested citizens to adopt street dogs.

"All dogs offered for adoption will undergo health check-ups, be vaccinated and be sterilised. Adoption of street dogs not only promotes animal welfare but also contributes to harmonious coexistence in the city and supports public health and safety," it said.

Not only citizens, NGOs working in the animal welfare sector and Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) can also come forward to adopt strays, it added.

The Supreme Court recently passed an order directing that all stray dogs in public places such as hospitals, school and parks be moved to shelters. The direction has pushed city corporations to look for temporary shelters and other alternatives to manage stray dogs.

Those interested in adopting stray dogs can contact the Assistant Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Room No 406-A, 4th Floor, Annex-3 Building GBA Head Office, NR Square.

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'Glad it was a non-AC bus': Survivors on escape from burning vehicle

Most passengers were headed to beach town Gokarna for vacation

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

A winter vacation to Gokarna turned tragic even before it began, as a bus travelling to the beach town from Bengaluru went up in flames in Chitradurga on Thursday morning.

The Seabird Tourists bus, a 32-seater non-AC sleeper, departed from Majestic at 8.30 pm on Wednesday, with a majority of the passengers headed to Gokarna, barring a few whose destinations were Kumta and Shivamogga.

Passengers *DH* spoke to remained grateful for having booked a non-AC bus.

"When we tried to get out of the bus, we realised that the front door was jammed. Despite many attempts to push it open, it wouldn't budge. That is when my wife suggested we jump out of the window as the fire was getting bigger. At that moment, we were so glad that this was a non-AC bus," recalled Hemraj Kumhar, who had booked an upper berth close to the main door.

Hemraj, a 37-year-old resident of Varthur, was travelling to Gokarna for a weekend getaway with his wife and eight-year-old son. While his son remained unharmed, his wife, Kalpana Prajapati, sustained injuries to her back.

The charred remains of the private bus which caught fire after a container truck hit it head-on, near Chitradurga during the early hours of Thursday.

"We were all asleep when the accident happened. I only woke up when I found it difficult to breathe and the window rod suddenly fell on my face. Before we realised what had happened, the driver, conductor and a few passengers had already exited the bus. Moments after we exited, the entire bus went up in flames," he told this reporter.

The family made it to the local hospital by hitching a ride and eventually reached Bengaluru by Thursday noon.

Similarly, 23-year-old IT employee Kiran Pal H was travelling to Gokarna with his friends Kirthan M, Nanditha G B and Devika H. All four were treated at Victoria Hospital on Thursday — two for burns and two for other injuries.

Kiran's brother, Kishan Pal, learned about the accident at 6 am. "Although the accident had happened much earlier, my brother did not want to make us anxious, so he called once he was at the local hospital. He was injured in his arms and legs after jumping from the window. Several glass shards have pierced his skin. All of them had to jump through the window, as that was the easiest exit," he shared.

Varun, a Chitradurga native, shared an upper berth with another passenger in the second-last row.

He was awake when the bus went up in flames and broke a window with his foot, pushed his co-passenger out and then jumped himself.

"I fractured my leg but I am alive. Thank God," he told *DH*.

Varun, a software engineer based in Bengaluru, had booked a seat on another bus but missed it at Goraguntepalya.

Shashikant M, 25, thanked his fate for having escaped the unfortunate accident after he missed the bus as his inbound flight from Andhra Pradesh was delayed.

(With inputs from S K Nrupathunga in Chitradurga)

The school bus carrying children which sustained damages after the driver veered into a ditch to avoid collision with the private bus that caught fire.

Bus carrying school kids miraculously escapes accident

CHITRADURGA, DHNS

Over 43 schoolchildren travelling in a bus miraculously escaped a horrific road accident on NH 48 near Javanagondanahalli in Hiriyur taluk on Thursday.

The children from a school in T Dasarahalli, Bengaluru, were on a trip to Dandeli in Uttara Kannada district. The school bus carrying children was right behind the private bus that met with an accident on National Highway-48.

As soon as the container rammed the private bus after hitting the road divider, the driver of the school bus drove the vehicle towards a ditch and then moved towards the service road to avoid collision.

The children escaped without any injuries. The driver's presence of mind saved the children's lives. However, the windshield of the school bus was damaged as it fell into the ditch. "The driver of the school bus immediately got down from the vehicle and rescued some passengers from the private bus which had caught fire," the police said. The driver also suffered some minor injuries.

However, the children continued their trip in another bus.

Speaking to media persons, Sachin, driver of the school bus, said, "The bus heading towards Gokarna overtook my bus. The container truck coming from opposite direction rammed the private bus after hitting the road divider. The bus caught fire within a few moments. "I noticed it and drove the bus towards the ditch and then on to the service road. All children escaped unhurt," he added.

Ill-fated bus had passed all checks, says transport commissioner

Karnataka to revise SOP for vehicles travelling during night

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

The bus involved in the Chitradurga accident in the early hours of Thursday had all the necessary certificates and was equipped with emergency exits, according to transport commissioner.

Commissioner for Transport and Road Safety Yogeesh A M said that the bus, which belonged to Seabird Tourists, had passed a surprise check carried out by the department on November 12. Seabird Tourists has been operating out of Bengaluru for the past 25 years.

"For the past month, we have been carrying out a drive targeting buses that operate on long journeys. This particular bus was checked during the campaign, and it was found that it had all the necessities in check. What occurred was a pure accident, where the lorry ended up colliding with the bus," he told *DH*.

Efforts are on to clear the container truck which crashed into the private bus.

The commissioner also visited the accident site with his team on Thursday morning, and has asked for a revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to be prepared for vehicles travelling during nightfall.

"This is not just for buses, but also for other vehicles like trucks and lorries. The SOP will be shared with all concerned. We will also be checking if there are enough bay areas for drivers to rest on long journeys," he said.

In the wake of the Kurnool bus fire accident on October 24, the Karnataka Transport Department launched an inspection drive on private buses operating out of Bengaluru, especially focused on buses registered in other states like Nagaland and Odisha but operating from Karnataka. The drive also included inspections of emergency exits and fire safety tools.

Such inspection drives will be carried forward into the New Year, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy said.

"Bus safety is of utmost importance, and we'll ensure safety rules are not flouted at any cost. We can also look into the fire-retardant materials which are used in these buses. Even if an accident occurs, we should know how the damage can be minimised. Will discuss this with bus operators," he said.

Techie friends die together; Man loses wife, daughter

CHITRADURGA, DHNS: The horrific road accident near Hiriyur has torn apart friends and destroyed families.

Manasa, Navya and Milana, who completed their MTech degrees from the same college, were working as software engineers in various companies in Manyata Tech Park in Bengaluru. They boarded the ill-fated bus at 9 pm on Wednesday. Milana lost both of her friends and was in a state of shock at taluk general hospital in Hiriyur.

Rashmi from Bhatkal had planned to take her two techie friends Gagana and Rakshita on a trip to Gokarna and Sigandhur and then take them to her hometown.

She called her mother on Wednesday night and told her that she would be coming home with her friends. Before starting the journey in Gandhinagar, Bengaluru, she stood in front of the bus and clicked a selfie. This picture has now gone viral on social media.

Gagana and Rakshita broke down in the hospital bed after hearing the news that Rashmi had died.

Darshan, who had dropped his spouse and daughter at the bus stop in Bengaluru, was trembling on the premises of the district general hospital in Chitradurga.

When the police asked him to alight from the car to identify the bodies, his limbs had lost all movement. He was hopeful that his wife and daughter were alive. But Darshan collapsed on the ground when he saw the black lumps of dead bodies.

6 die in Chitradurga bus-truck crash...

Bus-truck crash, from Page 1

They were on their way to Gokarna beach for Christmas. Manasa, Navya and Rashmi were techies working in Bengaluru.

The truck driver, who was said to be drowsy, hit the bus coming from the opposite direction after jumping over the median. He was trapped inside and died on spot.

The driver, cleaner and 25 passengers at the rear of the bus, managed to jump out of the bus after breaking the window panes and saved themselves. Some of the injured flagged passing vehicles to reach hospitals.

The police, who arrived at the scene after 20 minutes, admitted the seriously injured to hospitals. As many as 24 people, including the bus driver Rafiq and cleaner Mohammad Sadhiq, are undergoing treatment at hospitals in Chitradurga, Hubballi, Sira, Tumakuru and Bengaluru.

Traffic on the national highway was severely affected for more than 10 hours with vehicles heading towards Davangere and Dharwad stranded even till 12 noon. The police struggled to manage the traffic.

Chitradurga SP Ranjit Kumar Bandaru told reporters that 29 passengers had booked tickets in advance excluding the 5-year-old child. One did not travel and two boarded the bus en route.

He said, in all, 28 passengers were injured, four of them severely. SDRF and firemen helped extricate the bodies.

The death toll was confirmed only after the injured were contacted at 11 am. The five charred bodies were collected by forensic science laboratory experts. DNA tests had to be done to establish their identities. Bandaru said the identities of Bindu and her daughter Greya were confirmed but there was confusion among the parents regarding the identities of Manasa and Navya. "Rashmi's identity is yet to be ascertained," he added.

While Manasa's father Chandregowda, a cashier at a hotel in Channarayapatna, had made all arrangements for her wedding, Navya's father A N Manjappa was also set to choose a date for his daughter's wedding.

In a post on X, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Rs 5 lakh would be provided to the families of each of the deceased, while the injured would receive Rs 50,000 each. He said he has sought details of the accident and directed them to extend all possible assistance to the injured and the victims' families.

An investigation has been ordered to ascertain the exact cause of the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the next of kin of each of the deceased. The injured would be given Rs 50,000 each, the prime minister said in a post on X.

Highways busy as X'mas off stretched to weekend

Rush leaves vehicles stuck on B'luru's entry/exit points

BENGALURU, DHNS

A large number of people heading out for the long Christmas and New Year vacations virtually turned highways leading out of the city into parking lots on Thursday.

With Christmas falling on Thursday, followed by weekend (second Saturday and Sunday), many people took a day off on Friday, so that they have four holidays at a stretch, up to December 28.

Massive traffic snarls left thousands of commuters stranded for hours as the city's entry/exit points buckled under the festive rush.

Travellers reported being stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic for hours before even crossing the city limits.

Social media platforms, particularly X, were flooded with complaints. One user described the scene as "total gridlock," while others questioned the efficiency of the toll collection system during peak holiday periods.

A senior traffic police officer from Kengeri said that the long holiday triggered a "massive" surge in incoming and outgoing vehicles.

"The congestion on Mysuru Road started early Thursday and it took until the afternoon to clear," the officer told *DH*.

"This remains the only direct entry and exit point for those heading towards Mysuru, Gundlupet, MM Hills and further towards Ooty, Coimbatore and Kerala".

Traffic police said toll booths act as a primary chokepoint. Even with FASTag, it takes around 30 seconds for a vehicle to pass through the toll, but when thousands of vehicles arrive simultaneously, they pile up. The traffic police are bracing for a second wave of congestion on Sunday (December 28).

Officials observed a shift in traveller behaviour, with many now opting to enter the city late at night to avoid peak-hour traffic.

"The incoming traffic on Sunday is expected to peak late at night. We advise motorists to plan their journey in advance and remain patient," the officer said.

There was bumper-to-bumper traffic near Bhuvanahalli bypass on the outskirts of Hassan on Thursday. DH PHOTO

It's chock-a-block on B'luru-M'luru NH 75

The number of people travelling from Bengaluru and Mysuru to various tourist destinations, including Mangaluru and Madikeri, for year-end holidays has seen a big increase in last few days, reports *DHNS* from Hassan.

Hundreds of vehicles have taken to the roads from Wednesday night, jamming up the Bengaluru-Mangaluru national highway 75. Vehicles were seen stranded for kilometres at toll gates at Hirisave, Kunigal, Shantigrama and Byrapura in Hassan district.

The traffic police, on their part, are making all efforts for smooth movement of vehicles. The Hassan-Belur road also reported a rise in traffic. People from Bengaluru, Mysuru and other districts are making a beeline to places in Malnad region like Chikkamagaluru, Madikeri and Sakleshpur. The number of tourists visiting resorts in Sakleshpur taluk too has increased.

Hotels on the sides of the highway have made roaring business.

Alternative routes

Avoid NICE Road: Commuters are advised against using NICE Road to enter highway as it is currently experiencing heavy congestion.

The other way: Consider using Kanakapura Road or Kunigal-Magadi Road where possible, to bypass main expressway toll.

Bus driver, cleaner admitted to KMCRI

HUBBALLI, DHNS: The driver and cleaner of the private bus, which caught fire after it collided with a lorry in Hiriyur taluk of Chitradurga district, are admitted to the Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute (KCRI) in Hubballi.

Bus driver Mohammad Rafiq Hulagur (35) was seriously injured and is being treated at the ICU, while cleaner Mohammad Sadhiq Dharwad (19) sustained minor injuries.

"Mohammad Rafiq has a serious injury in the leg, and he also has chest pain and breathing problem," said KMCRI Medical Superintendent Eshwar Hasabi.

Mohammad Sadhiq recalled that he and the driver were thrown out of the bus when the accident occurred, and the bus caught fire suddenly.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi suggested the state government to be cautious regarding vehicle safety and renewal of driving licences, to prevent such accidents. Errors in vehicles should be traced technically to find out permanent solutions, he told reporters.

3 injured shifted to Bengaluru Victoria hospital for burns treatment

BENGALURU, DHNS: Three injured victims of the Chitradurga bus accident were shifted to the Burns Ward at Victoria Hospital here on Thursday.

Manjunath, 26, a resident of Bengaluru, was brought to the hospital by 7 am with injuries to both his hands and one leg.

His family members waiting outside the hospital said doctors had informed them that he has suffered third degree burns, meaning the outer layer of the skin and the layer under it were damaged.

"By the time we got the news and came here, they had already plastered his wounds and administered anesthesia. He is currently undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)," a family member told *DH*.

Dr Yogishwarappa, Professor & Unit Head Of the Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, said, "Manjunath has both deep second- degree and superficial third-degree burns in some areas. There is also inhalation of smoke and hence he is in the ICU."

Two other victims — Devika and Keerthana, both 22 — are also receiving treatment for 5%-6% burns, confirmed the doctor.

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A day after Delhi visit, Shivakumar meets Kharge

Says discussion limited to MGNREGA name change

BENGALURU, DHNS

A day after returning from New Delhi, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge here Thursday.

This meeting led to speculation amid the leadership tussle between Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

But Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka Congress president, said he did not discuss politics with Kharge.

Shivakumar said he gave inputs to Kharge ahead of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting scheduled on December 27. The CWC is slated to discuss the party's response against the new Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Asked if his leadership tussle came up with Kharge, Shivakumar said: "I don't need to (discuss) that. It's not required now. Siddaramaiah and I have already said that we'll do whatever the high command says."

On Wednesday, Shivakumar did not, or could not, meet top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. At a news conference, Shivakumar said he would "love to" remain as a party worker without any position. This was seen as his frustration.

"What I meant was that I'm a lifetime worker, with or without a post," Shivakumar said.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar meets AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge at his residence in Bengaluru on Thursday.

"As the party's president and worker, I've tied flags, pasted posters and swept the floor."

Shivakumar added: "I don't just come to an event, sit on the stage, make a speech and go. I've done every work in the party." Asked if he would visit New Delhi to meet the high command, he said: "I'll go if I'm called."

Shivakumar specified that he is not attending the CWC meeting. Asked about Siddaramaiah going, he said: "Maybe. I've learnt that three CMs have been invited. Deputy CM's aren't invited. Party presidents are called only for extended CWC meetings."

Sovereignity's many threats and how to safeguard it

CONSTITUTION IS LIGHT

Curated by

DH DECCAN HERALD | ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ

The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, while drafting the Preamble, clearly stated, "We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic" and "to secure all its citizens Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

From the wording of the Preamble, it is apparent that sovereignty vests in the people. There can be no doubt that it is the people of India who are sovereign.

Jawaharlal Nehru lucidly put it in the Constituent Assembly, "The word 'people' indicates that the Constitution was never created by the state, nor by the people of the several states, but by the people of India in their aggregate capacity."

Founding faith

The Preamble makes it very clear that it is the people of India who are the authors of the Constitution. Thus, sovereignty in the people is the founding faith of the Constitution.

In the Indian Constitution, 'sovereign' means India is a fully independent nation with Supreme authority and not a protectorate of any outside power. Whether it is in its foreign affairs or internal affairs, there can be no external or foreign control.

This sovereignty is declared in the Preamble, which states that the Constitution derives its authority from the people of India.

While external sovereignty implies that the country is completely independent from any foreign land, internal sovereignty refers to its authority to make its own laws, enforce them, and govern its territory and people without any external limitations.

It is the people who are the source of the Constitution's authority, as highlighted by the phrase, "We, the people of India" in the Preamble.

Then there is the concept of dual sovereignty. Although not directly mentioned in the Constitution, the dual sovereignty of the Centre and the state is a crucial aspect of sovereignty.

Article 245 empowers Parliament to make laws for the country as a whole, whereas the State legislature makes laws only for its own territory. Article 246 provides that the Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction in respect of matters enumerated in the Union List, and the state legislature has exclusive power to make laws in respect of matters mentioned in the State List.

Fundamental Duty

The term 'sovereign' is also mentioned in Article 51A(c). As a part of the Fundamental Duties, the Article mandates that it shall be the duty of every citizen to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

The Republic of India is considered a single entity, and the entity is termed 'Sovereignty.' It represents one nation, one country, one voice, one state and one will.

By the Constitution (16th Amendment) Act, 1963, the words "sovereignty and integrity of India" were added to clauses (2) to (4) of Article 19 and the State was empowered to curb the freedom granted by making a law imposing such restriction as might be necessary in the interests of sovereignty and Integrity of India.

It was felt necessary at that time, when there was a strong movement in Tamil Nadu, where some sought secession from the union, demanding state autonomy. The Government felt that the right to freedom and speech and expression could not be used to such an extent as to advocate secession, and therefore, these words were added.

A threat to the sovereignty of the country can arise anytime, and hence the necessity to safeguard its sovereignty. In the 1990s, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) took up arms to demand a sovereign state, posing a threat and a challenge to the sovereignty of India.

Sovereignty here is used in reference to the country's unity and protection of its boundaries as one unit. It also ensures that no individual leader or group preaches or professes rebellion or secession.

India's sovereignty is also reflected in its foreign policy, which is based on the principles of non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and co-operation, and respect for international law and norms.

India has established diplomatic relations with almost all the countries in the world, besides being a member of global and regional organisations such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the SAARC, ASEAN, BRICS and G20.

The defence and security policy of India also manifests sovereignty. India needs to protect its territorial integrity and national interests, which are increasingly under external and internal threats. India's sovereignty is also demonstrated in its economic policy, which in recent times faced many hurdles of trade and tariffs.

The sovereignty of India is exposed to various threats such as external aggression, foreign interference, terrorism, border disputes, internal unrest and violence, secessionist or separatist movements.

The sovereignty of India cannot be taken for granted or compromised. It has to be consistently defended and preserved for successive generations.

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HDK looks back, says he kept word given to farmers as CM

BENGALURU, DHNS: Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy on Thursday reminisced about his 14-month government with the Congress in 2018-19, claiming that "he fulfilled his word to farmers" and "came out."

"I accidentally formed an alliance with the BJP. The governance we gave with the BJP in 2006-07 was historical... Later, I became (chief minister) for a second time. I wanted to exit early and came out. I knew what the situation was. I had given my word to the farmers. I fulfilled it and came out," he said.

He was speaking at the Good Governance Day programme on the occasion of the 101st birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1924-2018).

The Congress-JD(S) alliance government fell in 2019.

Kumaraswamy hailed Vajpayee and former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani for the BJP's electoral growth over the decades.

Haveri MP and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said, "Vajpayee was a rare personality. Mahatma Gandhi had spoken about Ram Rajya and Swarajya. But Vajpayee spoke about Surajya (good governance)... While (former prime minister) Lal Bahadur Shastri gave us the slogan Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Vajpayee added Jai Vigyaan to it."

Taking a dig at the power struggle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar, Bommai said: "...People have given you power in people's politics. Why do you do power politics? How long will you do, for whose benefit will you do? People are asking these questions."

BJP will win 130-140 seats & assume power on 'own strength': BYV

BENGALURU, DHNS

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra acknowledged on Thursday that the party was in the opposition due to "its own mistakes," but exuded confidence of the saffron party coming to power by getting 130-140 seats on its "own strength."

He was speaking during an event to mark the 101st birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"We don't have to worry. Public sentiment is against the anti-people, anti-poor Congress. If the elections are held in 2028 or even tomorrow, BJP will come to power by getting 130-140 seats on its own. For this, we all need to strengthen the party," Vijayendra added.

Though the BJP has tasted power twice in the state, it is yet to get 113 seats - the simple majority needed to form a government in Karnataka. Its best performance till date was in 2008, when it won 110 seats.

Claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was providing "corruption-free" administration, Vijayendra said the town panchayat elections had revealed the state of the Congress.

Stating that Vajpayee had the "foresight" that Karnataka would one day become the "fortress" of the BJP in the south, the BJP state president noted that the former Prime Minister had inspired Karnataka BJP leaders such as B S Yediyurappa, D H Shankaramurthy, Ramachandra Gowda and Jagadish Shettar among others.

Recalling his interactions with Vajpayee, former chief minister Jagadish Shettar credited Vajpayee as a leader who emphasised on issues concerning women and backward classes.

Four-day world Ayurveda summit begins

BENGALURU, DHNS: The second World Ayurveda Summit opened at Palace Grounds here on Thursday, with this year's event focusing on 'Ayurveda for a healthier future,' reviving Ayurveda in modern practice and empowering next generation ayurvedic healers.

The four-day summit has been organised by the Kaje Ayurvedic Charitable Foundation in collaboration with the union ministry of AYUSH and the state AYUSH department.

The summit aims to shift from reactive treatment to proactive wellness, to understand traditional nature-based solutions and build a health-centric conscious society.

A unanimous demand was raised at the summit to increase evidence-based scientific research related to the Ayurveda system of medicine and that both union and state governments should take concrete steps in that direction.

Speaking at the event, Dharmasthala Dharmadhikari Veerendra Heggade said increasing research in the field of Ayurveda would aid formulating medicines and in treatment of diseases.

Participants do an exercise at the inauguration of the four-day second world Ayurveda summit at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru on Thursday. DH PHOTO/M S MANJUNATH

"Those practising Ayurveda and students studying it need not hesitate. This system of medicine is gaining global recognition. The union and state governments should establish research centres, prioritise scientific studies and encourage local Ayurveda practitioners," he noted.

After the inauguration, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said Ayurveda plays a significant role in helping people lead a healthy life. "Ayurveda and yoga are preventive lifestyles that help in avoiding diseases. They were developed thousands of years ago on a scientific foundation."

Ayurveda, he said, is not just a treatment system, but also a dietary practice and a way of life. He stressed the need for more research in Ayurveda and for the emergence of specialised Ayurvedic doctors.

"For instance, in modern medicine, people easily trust certified specialists such as nephrologists. Similarly, in Ayurveda too, there should be a proper system of certification with clear standards for specialised practitioners," the minister said.

Blackbuck poaching: Minister orders inquiry into 'cover-up'

BENGALURU, DHNS: Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre has ordered an inquiry into a complaint over alleged cover-up of an incident involving poaching of three blackbucks in Kadur range of Chikkamagaluru division.

The carcass of three blackbucks were found in a field close to Basur Kaval forest, declared as a blackbuck sanctuary in 2011. The matter came to light only when activists complained about it on Tuesday evening. Activists had raised a complaint that forest officers in the area had tried to cover up the matter. They noted that even though a post-mortem was conducted, a case was not registered despite the carcass bearing clear signs of gunshots.

In a letter dated Wednesday, Khandre asked the chief wildlife warden to conduct an inquiry into the poaching incident. When I questioned during a meeting on the wildlife conflict at 6.50 pm, I was told that a range forest officer had been sent. "However, I have received information that at 3.40 pm even the post-mortem of the carcass was completed. Despite clear instructions that the department should be informed about the death of Schedule I animals, there is a failure to provide details of the killing of three blackbucks. This has been taken seriously," he said.

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Tender Notice No. RWF/S/16/2025-26 Dt. 23.12.2025

On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Materials Manager invites Electronic Open Tender from Manufacturers / authorised dealers for supply of the item, on the Indian Railways e-portal **www.ireps.gov.in**.

Tender No.: P2256302, **Brief Item Description:** Replacement of 2 nos. of 400 KVA Transformers with 2 nos. transformer of 500 KVA capacity and LT switch gear panel. **Quantity:** 1 Set, **Date & Time of Closing of Tenders:** 22.01.2026 at 14:00 Hrs. **Pre Bid Conference:** 07.01.2026 at 15:00 hrs.

The above Tender details can be viewed on our website **www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in** or **www.ireps.gov.in.** The tender documents and the corrigendum to the Tender if any, will be available on the portal only.

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NOTIFICATION (Through KPP portal only)

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Sl No	Particulars	EMD (In Rs.)	Pre Bid Meeting Date and Time	Last Date and Time for uploading the Tender	Technical Bids Opening Date and Time
1.	Re-Tender for Supply of 18,720 Kgs KOF or Equivalent Brand Sona Swad Gold Rice	25,000	-	05.01.2026 by 03.00 PM	06.01.2026 @ 03.30 PM
	Supply of 4,500 Kgs KCOGF or Equivalent Brand Refined Sun Flower Safal Premium Oil	15,000			
2.	Tender for Supply of 500 Nos Dupion Silk Shirts to KSIC, Godown, Bengaluru	22,000	-	27.01.2026 by 03.00 PM	28.01.2026 @ 03.30 PM
3.	Re-Tender for Entrusting Work of Stainless Steel Cladding for 04 Nos Degumming Tanks at KSIC, SWF, Mysuru Unit-1 Dyeing Section	25,000	-	09.01.2026 by 03.00 PM	12.01.2026 @ 03.30 PM
4.	Tender for Job work of Contrast Dyeing of 10,000 Nos Mysore Silk Zari Sarees	1,95,000	06.01.2026 by 11.00 AM	27.01.2026 by 03.00 PM	28.01.2026 @ 03.30 PM
	Job work of Contrast Dyeing of 5,000 Nos LP Design KSIC Zari Sarees Sarees	1,45,000			
5.	Tender for Providing 30 Nos Shuttle Guard for Looms	1,400	-	27.01.2026 by 03.00 PM	28.01.2026 @ 03.30 PM
	Providing 20 Nos Motor Guard for Looms	1,200			
	Providing 30 Nos SS back rest rollers for Looms	10,300			
	Providing 2 Nos 600 m3/hr Blower for CETP	8,100			

Tender Documents, details of the Notification, schedule terms & conditions can be downloaded from **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/.** Further details can be had from the office of the Undersigned during working hours or KPP Portal - helpdesk-080-46010000 and 080-68948777.

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MOVIE R | E | V | I | E | W

Sudeep scores as massy hero in mixed bag thriller

PRANATI A S

Kichcha Sudeep is back as a super cop. Exactly a year ago, he was seen as Arjun Mahakshay in 'Max'. This time, he is called Ajay Markandeya aka Mark!

There is not much of a difference between the two. They are both witty, smart and can beat up a hundred people. However, director Vijay Kartikeyaa decides to step outside the police station this time.

Suspended police officer Mark has to defeat the bad guys and save 18 kidnapped children. He also has to save the state from a bad politician who is about to take oath as chief minister.

A still from Kichcha Sudeep starrer 'Mark'.

★★½☆☆

Mark
Kannada (Theatres)
Director: Vijay Kartikeyaa
Cast: Sudeep, Naveen Chandra, Shine Tom Chacko, Yogi Babu, Roshni Prakash

And he has only about 24 hours. Mark uses his wit and races against time to fulfil his duty as a conscientious police officer, even when suspended.

To create a mass hero, Vijay seems to go easy on the nuances. The situations are solid but the way Mark deals with them has logic gaps. For example, when he finally saves the children, why is he the only one carrying them all, one by one, when there are at least 10 policemen waiting outside? He is characterised as both brainy and brawny but for the sake of mass appeal, there is little focus on his intelligent side. While 'Max' did not have a strong antagonist, 'Mark''s many villains come across as loud. Naveen Chandra as Bhadra is meant to be a deadly villain, but he falls into the same campy mould.

On the brighter side, the film has excellent cinematography by Shekhar Chandru, who creates a visually stunning experience with his lighting, especially in the action scenes. Ajaneesh Loknath's music is passable.

Sudeep has once again done away with the 'namesake' heroine, a common trope in most mass films, and it is a commendable choice. He delivers a good performance as Mark, aided by a few whistle-worthy, stylish shots, but he isn't as compelling as he was in Max. He carried a distinct aura in 'Max' that feels absent here.

'Mark' may not be a must watch but it is surely not disappointing if you watch it.

'Pak got 20 Chinese 4th gen...

Fighter jets, from Page 1

The PLA, the Pentagon says, is interested in military access along the sea lines of communication in the Malacca Strait, the Strait of Hormuz, and other areas in Africa and the Middle East. Earlier this year, Gabon confirmed China's interest in a base in the Gulf of Guinea.

Islamabad announced buying 25 J-10C fighter jets from Beijing with an option of 11 more in Dec 2021 – nearly five years after India inked a deal with France to buy 36 Rafale jets. During Operation Sindoor, J-10C jets were used by the Pakistan Air Force.

The report also said China supplied strike-capable Caihong and Wing Loong UAV and four frigates to Pakistan. While delivery of the Yuan class submarine to Pakistan is yet to commence, the first one of the eight under-water boats is likely to be delivered to Islamabad in 2026.

According to the Beijing-Islamabad deal, Pakistan Navy is buying eight such submarines from China with technology transfer to modernise its submarine fleet. While four of them would come from China, the rest would be built in Karachi.

All of these boats will have air independent propulsion technology that will allow them to stay under water for a long time.

The Pentagon report also said China had developed the first new drone, the Feyi, that can be launched by and return to a submarine, and repeatedly transit between the sea and air for reconnaissance, surveillance, and strike missions.

On space cooperation, the report said that throughout 2024, China increased its space cooperation outreach worldwide, to boost its image as a collaborative space power while "undermining US global leadership", particularly with developing nations.

As of December 2024, China signed nearly 200 intergovernmental space cooperation agreements with more than 50 countries including Pakistan covering earth observation, deep space exploration, satellite development, lunar exploration, and manned spaceflight.

B'desh belongs to all faiths...

Bangladesh, from Page 1

On Monday, minority groups in Bangladesh held a protest in Dhaka over the interim government's failure to prevent the persecution of minorities.

Rahman's call for unity came as the hardline Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami, the BNP's coalition partner during its 2001-2006 tenure in power, has emerged as its main rival in the upcoming polls after the interim government banned the Awami League.

"Whatever political party we belong to, whatever religion we believe in, whether we are non-partisan individuals -- all must join hands to maintain law and order," said Rahman, the 60-year-old son of ailing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who has emerged as a leading contender for prime ministership in the polls.

Over 23,000 quit paramilitary forces in 11 years: Govt

438 incidents of suicide; seven fratricides in last 3 years

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Over 23,000 personnel have quit paramilitary forces in the past 11 years, with the BSF topping the list with close to 7,500 such instances, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has said.

In a statistics tabled in Lok Sabha earlier this month in questions posed by Trinamool Congress MP Yusuf Pathan, it has also said that around 440 suicides and seven cases of fratricide were also reported since 2023.

According to the MHA, no resignations have been reported from the National Security Guards (NSG) since 2014. The CRPF has come second in the list, with 7,456 resignations, following the BSF, which recorded 7,493 resignations.

The total number of resignations in seven paramilitary forces was 23,360. The CISF reported 4,137 resignations between 2014 and 2025, while it was 1,967 for ITBP, 1,936 for SSB and 371 for Assam Rifles.

While 2024 topped the list of resignations, 2025 has so far recorded 3,077 resignations. The least was in 2020 when 959 resignations were reported.

The statistics showed that the resignations stood below the 2,000-mark between 2016 and 2022, while it crossed it in 2023, when it was 2,471. In 2014, it was 2,033 and in the next year, it rose to 2,070 but fell to 1,363 in 2016.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, no resignations have been reported from the National Security Guards (NSG) since 2014. DH FILE PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

Of the 438 suicide cases reported from the paramilitary forces between 2023 and 2025, the highest 157 was in 2023, followed by 148 and 133 in the next two years. CRPF has the highest number of 159 cases of suicides in the last three years, followed by BSF at 120 and CISF at 60.

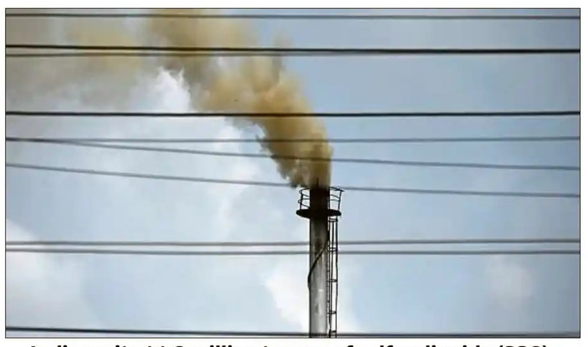
Seven cases of fratricides were also recorded in the last three years, with four of them reported this year. CRPF and Assam Rifles have two such cases each, while SSB, ITBP and BSF reported one each.

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the working hours in paramilitary forces is generally eight hours, but it varies depending on the operational exigencies. "There is a necessary leave/training reserve built in the structure of the battalion so that the personnel get leave and rest," he said.

Measures have been taken to implement a transparent, rational and fair leave policy and to regulate duty hours to ensure adequate rest and leave, he said.

The government has made a provision for 75 days leave, which includes 60 days earned leave and 15 days casual leave for personnel deployed in the field, while for other government servants, there is a provision of 30 days earned leave and eight days casual leave.

"Mental health support, wherever it is required, is being provided to the paramilitary personnel through a network of paramilitary hospitals, composite hospitals, unit hospitals, and specialised psychiatric services," he said.



India emits 11.2 million tonnes of sulfur dioxide (SO2), the highest in the globe, and is next only to China when it comes to the emission of nitrogen oxides (NOx) at 9.4 million tonnes and ammonia (NH3) at 10.4 million tonnes.

Ignoring PM2.5 precursors hurting clean air goal: Study

BENGALURU, DHNS: Nearly six years since it was launched, the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) overlooks precursors to PM2.5, the smaller pollutant that has serious implications for human health, a new study has pointed out.

The study, conducted by Manoj Kumar N and Monish Raj from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), said that a large amount of PM 2.5, linked to serious lung diseases, was not generated directly. Instead, the particles form through atmospheric chemical processes. "Understanding the share arising from this secondary formation is essential for designing targeted, sector-specific interventions," it noted.

India emits 11.2 million tonnes of sulfur dioxide (SO2), the highest in the globe, and is next only to China when it comes to the emission of nitrogen oxides (NOx) at 9.4 million tonnes and ammonia (NH3) at 10.4 million tonnes.

CREA said that the secondary pollutants, like ammonium sulfate, formed from the reaction between SO2 and NH3 in the atmosphere, were responsible for nearly one-third of PM 2.5 pollution. Ammonium sulfate thereby links coal-based power generation, industrial activity and agricultural ammonia to PM2.5 pollution. Ammonium sulfate contribution to PM 2.5 goes up to 40% during the winter and post-monsoon season in almost all of the country, save for the northern and western airsheds. While this reduces in Summer in other states, the northeast states continue to see a higher (31-40%) contribution.

Shift in strategy

The study has called for a shift in strategy to decisively target beyond particulate matter.

"Given that ammonium sulfate alone accounts for roughly one-quarter to two-fifths of PM2.5 mass across most states, effective PM2.5 mitigation is not possible without explicitly targeting the precursor gases sulfur dioxide and ammonia," it said.

It also called for a check on SO2 emissions, particularly from coal-fired power plants. The finding makes a strong case for reinstating mandatory flue gas desulfurisation requirements, reversing the dilutions of emission norms by the Centre.

The study also called for explicit regulation on ammonia emissions, multi-state coordination based on air-shed models and strengthening the monitoring of PM 2.5.

"As the NCAP is revised, India must focus not only on PM2.5 concentrations but also on what the pollution is made of. With secondary ammonium sulfate accounting for up to 42 per cent of PM2.5, largely driven by SO2 from coal-based power plants, precursor controls and composition monitoring are essential for air quality improvement," said Manoj Kumar.

Nilgiris gets AI centre to address human-elephant conflict

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

Gudalur in the picturesque Nilgiris district has been one of the hotspots for man-elephant conflict in Tamil Nadu, leading to human casualties, crop damage, and property destruction.

After several conventional mitigation methods failed to prevent the conflict, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has now turned to Artificial Intelligence to address the issue.

The department's first initiative using an AI-early warning system in Coimbatore's Madukkarai was successful after no deaths of elephants were reported on the 13-km stretch on the Pothanur-Palakkad railway section since November 2023, when the new system was implemented.

The system has enabled nearly 6,000 safe elephant crossings in the past two years.

The dedicated command and control centre at Nadugani Range in the Gudalur Forest Division, which was inaugurated last week, will use 46 AI-enabled thermal cameras to detect wildlife movement early and warn people with real-time alerts.

"Of the 46 cameras, 34 are AI-enabled IR cameras, while the remaining are AI thermal cameras. These 46 points where the cameras are placed have been identified using 10 years of data of where elephants were detected in the past. Once the camera identifies an elephant, it triggers an alert to the command centre," N Vengatesh Prabhu, DFO (Gudalur), told *DH*.

The alerts are transmitted instantly to field staff through the command and control centre through 24 speaker systems positioned near human settlements, as well as through SMS notifications.

Prabhu added that even cameras are capable of transmitting signals, triggering direct alerts to people of the area, whose mobile numbers are fed in the system, and the forest department staff.

The command and control centre in Gudalur forest division will use 46 AI-enabled thermal cameras to detect wildlife movement and warn people with real-time alerts.

SANTA ON SEASHORE

Artists create a sand sculpture conveying wishes for Christmas on the Panambur beach in Mangaluru on Thursday.

One in three urban youth unemployed in J&K: PLFS

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Jammu and Kashmir has recorded the highest urban youth unemployment rate in India, with nearly one in three young people in towns and cities out of work, placing it far above the national average, according to the latest government labour data.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) shows that 32.3% of urban youth aged 15–29 in J&K were unemployed in the July–September 2025 quarter. At the all-India level, urban youth unemployment during the same period was 18.4%.

The situation has worsened over the past year. Urban youth unemployment in the Union Territory has risen from the corresponding quarter of 2024, even as national indicators showed relative stability, highlighting a sharper regional stress.

Labour surveys consistently show that J&K has one of the highest female unemployment rates in the country, especially among young women in urban areas. Women's unemployment in the Union Territory is more than twice that of men, a gap far wider than the national average.

Rural J&K reports lower unemployment rates than urban areas, but employment there remains heavily concentrated in agriculture and self-employment, offering limited income security. Nationally, agriculture's share in employment has been gradually declining, but in J&K it continues to absorb a disproportionately large share of the workforce.

Education has failed to insulate young people from joblessness. While unemployment among graduates is a nationwide concern, J&K stands out for the sheer scale of educated unemployment. Government data shows that over three lakh educated youth have registered as unemployed on official portals, one of the highest such figures relative to population size.

The underlying reason lies in the structure of the economy. Manufacturing and organised private-sector employment remain weak, providing far fewer jobs than the national average. Across India, organised private employment accounts for a much larger share of urban jobs; in J&K, its footprint is minimal, pushing young workers into informal, low-productivity activities.

PLFS data shows that more than four-fifths of workers in J&K are in the informal sector, compared to around 90% nationally, but with far fewer industrial and service-sector opportunities to offset informal employment. Self-employment dominates, while regular salaried jobs remain scarce.

Economists say the comparison with national trends is stark: while India's labour market has struggled to create enough quality jobs, J&K faces a deeper structural deficit, marked by exceptionally high youth unemployment, weak private-sector absorption and limited industrial diversification.

4-year-old tigress rescued in Bandipur reserve

GUNDLUPET (CHAMRAJANAGAR DIST), DHNS: A four-year-old tiger fell into the trap laid by the forest department at Depapura village in the taluk in the wee hours of Thursday.

According to a press release from assistant conservator of forests, Gundlupet sub-division, Bandipur tiger reserve, there were complaints from people on frequent tiger attacks on livestock at Depapura, Sheelavantapura, Hethuru, Somanapura and surrounding villages.

The department placed a Tumakuru cattle pen cage in the village and laid a calf as bait on December 14.

The tiger, which came in search of food on Thursday, entered the cage to prey on the calf, only to get trapped.

She is said to have camped in the reserve forest between Depapura and Terakanambi, and had been preying on livestock, creating panic among the people.

The forest department had launched a search operation with the help of drone cameras. As the land where the tiger was captured is close to the Therakanambi-Depapur main road, hundreds of people flocked to see the big cat. The department personnel had a tough time in controlling the crowd.

The tiger is being monitored by a team of veterinarians and forest department officers. The next course of action would be decided based on directions from higher officers.

The four-year-old tigress that fell into the cage laid by the forest department near Depapura in Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Thursday.
DH PHOTO

Books on functional disability cases released

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Neuro Justice Trilogy and the Neuro Justice Framework Handbook were released at Nimhans on Thursday.

The books aim to transform the Indian judiciary's assessment of human life and functional disability following motor vehicle accidents.

The handbook is authored by functional neurosurgeon Dr Sharan Srinivasan and neurorehabilitation expert Dr Prathiba Sharan.

The trilogy and the handbook propose a paradigm shift from a symptom-based to a function-based justice system. The trilogy was launched by Supreme Court judge Justice Aravind Kumar, Justice (retired) R V Raveendran and Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dinesh Gundu Rao.

Rao highlighted the framework's relevance to public health.

"The government places high value on thought leadership that integrates medical science with ethical governance to improve the lives of citizens," he noted.

The Neuro Justice Trilogy + handbook is published by the Swaasthya Aarogya Foundation Trust to cut tribunal resolution times by 50% to ensure that justice is served.

India faces nearly nine lakh pending motor accident claims, with compensation often delayed beyond the rehabilitation window.

The Neuro Justice Framework Handbook documents how early, function-based understanding can reduce injustice, caregiver burnout and economic collapse, while helping courts arrive at fair, consistent outcomes.

Boost for Sharavathi project as state okays framework

Sharavathi, from Page 1

This is a prerequisite for another approval: the diversion of forest land. Work on the ground can begin after receiving both the approvals.

Apart from quoting materials available in secondary sources, the framework doesn't provide any details regarding the actual and site-specific mitigation measures required on the ground. In his letter to the government, Ray stated that the adequacy of the measures proposed by the framework cannot be ascertained as no scientific assessment has been conducted regarding the project impact area and potential impact of the project on the wildlife.

However, the officer cleared the document as a framework. "It is recommended that a detailed wildlife mitigation plan be prepared by a scientific institution, such as Wildlife Institute of India, after a thorough study of all aspects of the project area, and submitted to the chief wildlife warden for consideration and approval," his recommendation said.

Vague approvals

The approval is similar to the opaque manner in which the project has received a push at each level. The state and the Union governments have come under criticism for pushing the project without disclosing any of the crucial details.

It began in January, when the State Board of Wildlife (SBWL) approved the project without including the mitigation conditions proposed by the forest department, though the same was announced by Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre.

In July, the National Board of Wildlife also gave "in-principle" recommendation to the project.

JOURNEY OF PROJECT

- **October 2023** KPCL seeks forest clearance
- **November** Application submitted for wildlife clearance.
- **January** State Board of Wildlife clears project
- **March** State government gives in-principle approval for forest diversion
- **April** MoEF Deputy Inspector General of Forests lists 15 reasons to reject project
- Rejection is overruled by superior officer, Deputy Director General
- **June** Standing Committee of NBWL gives conditional approval
- **August** Standing Committee orders site visit.
- **December** State chief wildlife warden approves wildlife mitigation plan framework.

The committee included the conditions that were omitted by the SBWL. The approval was given even though the condition included directions that would change salient features of the project.

Following written submissions by two members, the standing committee of the NBWL directed a three-member committee to visit the site and submit a report so that the proposal can be considered once again. Sagar-based conservationist Akhilesh Chipli said one cannot expect anything better from the Karnataka Forest Department. "The framework is just another formality with its entire content being simply copy-paste from secondary sources. A graduate student can prepare such a document in one day," he said, adding that the Chief Wildlife Warden has "completely ignored" the spirit of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Fragile area

The sanctuary comprising areas susceptible for landslides was created to save the arboreal LTM, which has been declared an endangered species. It also supports other threatened species in the area, including tiger, leopard, slender loris, pangolin, dhole.

The framework document relied on secondary sources to speak of the direct and indirect impact on the area. For the LTMs, the document spoke of building 15-metre long canopy bridges to cross the new roads.

However, there was no clarity on how they will mitigate the habitat disturbance, soil erosion, wildlife disturbance, increased landslide and flood risk as well as indirect impacts like water degradation, cumulative ecological stress and reduced disaster resilience.

Chipli noted that the the Standing Committee of the NBWL was empowered to approve only those projects that serve the best interests of wildlife.

"Since this is an energy infrastructure project involving extensive tunneling, blasting with explosives, building underground powerhouse etc and has no connection to wildlife conservation, there is no legal basis under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, to grant it even an 'in-principle' approval," he added.

Bengal migrant worker killed in Odisha for 'not sharing bidi'

SAMBALPUR/KOLKATA, PTI: A group of six men allegedly sought a 'bidi' from migrant workers from West Bengal and then demanded to see their Aadhaar card, before beating one of them to death and injuring others in Odisha's Sambalpur district, police said on Thursday.

While the Odisha Police asserted that the incident occurred following an altercation over a bidi on Wednesday night, the workers claimed they were assaulted on suspicion of being Bangladeshis.

Trinamool alleged that the incident in the BJP-ruled state was a fallout of the saffron party's "sustained campaign against Bengalis".

The six accused people were arrested, an officer said.

Juel Sheikh, the deceased, along with a few others from Bengal, worked at a construction site in Shanti Nagar. When they were preparing food at their living place, a group of six men stopped them and asked for a bidi. When they denied, the workers were asked to show their Aadhaar cards.

An altercation broke out over this, leading to a scuffle between the two sides, police said. Sheikh was hit on the head, and he died while undergoing treatment at the Sambalpur hospital.

Workers alleged that the attackers called them Bangladeshis before assaulting Sheikh and two others. Two other injured persons have been hospitalised and are under treatment.

Sikhs perform 'Gatka', an ancient martial art, during a 'Nagar Kirtan' organised as part celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh's Parkash Purab, in Dehradun, on Thursday. PTI

Modi attacks Gandhis, says one family held nation hostage

Claims dynastic politics led to political untouchability

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Nehru-Gandhi family, saying one family had held the country hostage for years, and that the BJP government freed the nation from them.

Speaking after inaugurating the "Rashtriya Prerna Sthal" here, Modi said dynastic politics had a "unique nature".

"It is surrounded by insecurity, and owing to this reason, it tries to belittle others... This tendency gave birth to political untouchability in the country," he claimed.

Modi, who unveiled the statues of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 101st birth anniversary, along with those of Jan Sangh ideologue Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya, said there had been a tendency in the country to link everything good with one family.

"Be it the roads or statues, they all were members of one family... Even the names of localities were after members of one family... The BJP brought the country out of one-family-centred politics," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of 'Rashtriya Prerna Sthal' on the 101st birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lucknow. PTI

Terming the Gandhis a "royal family", Modi said the "shahi parivar" never mentioned Dalit icon B R Ambedkar, fearing that it might belittle its importance. "Both the Congress and the Samajwadi Party committed the sin of trying to wipe out Ambedkar... They both never gave him the respect he deserved," he added.

Modi also referred to the abrogation of Article 370, which ended the special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and said he was proud to be the person who could do it.

He added that Mukherjee had said that the country could not have two laws and two constitutions.

On development

The PM also said that during the BJP rule, crores of Indians had defeated poverty, and that it was possible because the government gave preference to people who were standing last in line.

He also said that Indian products were now reaching all over the world owing to the "Make in India" initiative.

Modi also extended Christmas wishes to the Christian community.

Earlier, he was accorded a rousing reception upon his arrival here. Union minister Rajnath Singh, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and members of his Cabinet were present on the occasion.

Christmas TROUBLES

INCIDENTS TARGETING CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS WERE REPORTED FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY IN THE PAST WEEK

- **BAREILLY, UP** — Bajrang Dal workers recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' in front of St Alphonsus Cathedral Church
- **JABALPUR, MADHYA PRADESH** — A visually-challenged woman was publicly abused and physically harassed by the BJP city vice president
- **LAJPAT NAGAR, DELHI** — A group of men threatens women and children wearing Santa Claus caps in public places
- **KERALA**
  - **THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**
    - Lok Bhavan cancels Christmas holiday
    - Chief postmaster general cancels celebrations in post offices
  - **PALAKKAD** — A carol group that included children attacked in Pudussery
- **SRIGANGANAGAR, RAJASTHAN** — Education Department warns private schools against compelling students to dress as Santa Claus
- **NALBARI, ASSAM** — VHP-Bajrang Dal workers vandalise Christmas celebrations in a school and damage festival items at shops.
- **RAIPUR, CHHATTISGARH** — Hindutva group vandalises Christmas decorations at a shopping mall
- **HARIDWAR, UTTARAKHAND** — A hotel run by state tourism department cancels celebration on the banks of Ganga after protests

UP govt Cancels holiday and directs institutions to celebrate the birth anniversary of former PM AB Vajpayee

Right-wing groups disrupt Christmas celebrations

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Right-wing activists on Thursday disrupted Christmas celebrations in some parts of the country even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended a Christmas morning service at a church here along with a large congregation of Christians of Delhi and north India.

In UP's Bareilly, Bajrang Dal leaders gathered in front of St Alphonsus Cathedral Church and recited "Hanuman Chalisa", claiming that they were protesting against the "objectionable" portrayal of Hindu temples and their customs during a festival.

A private-school principal in Rajasthan's Nagaur district alleged that a group of people claiming to be Bajrang Dal members threatened students and staff over Christmas celebrations at the institute on Thursday. Following a complaint from the school owner, the police detained three persons. Around 40 students were present during the programme, and the incident frightened them.

Incidents of right-wing activists disrupting Christmas celebrations were reported from Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Kerala, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh over the past four-five days.

In Delhi, Modi attended the Christmas morning service at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption. "Attended the Christmas morning service at The Cathedral Church of the Redemption in Delhi. The service reflected the timeless message of love, peace and compassion. May the spirit of Christmas inspire harmony and goodwill in our society," Modi posted on X.

Oppn hits back

Quoting Modi's post, Trinamool MP Derek O'Brien said, "Love? Peace? Compassion? Harmony? Goodwill? Christmas?"

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said, "When a few right-wing violent groups, acting in the name of the majority, indulge in attacks and riots, even as the prime minister participates in Christmas celebrations, it sends a disturbing message to the nation."

Congress leader Pawan Khera said, "These people go outside mosques and play DJ, blaring provocative songs. On Christmas, they read the Hanuman Chalisa outside churches, snatch Santa Claus hats, and cause destruction... These goons can neither belong to Hindu dharma nor have any connection to Indian civilisation."

Parliamentary panel seeks early decision on J&K statehood

Says it was a promise made during 2019 reorganisation

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A Parliamentary panel has asked the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to expedite the process of grant of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was a promise made by the Union government in 2019 when the state was bifurcated into two union territories.

The Rajya Sabha Committee on Government Assurances made the recommendation in a report tabled in the Upper House during the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament.

The committee was examining the issues raised in an unstarred question on July 27, 2022, regarding the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir.

People pass by as security personnel stand guard outside a catholic church during Christmas celebrations, in Srinagar, on Thursday. PTI

The report said the issue was discussed by the panel headed by senior AIADMK MP M Thambiduarai with representatives of the government of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the MHA during a study visit to Srinagar on July 13 last year.

"...Restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir was a promise made by the Union government at the time of reorganisation of the erstwhile state in 2019. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all the concerned authorities to expedite the necessary procedures involved to fulfil that promise of the Union government," the report said.

"The Committee, therefore, recommends the Ministry of Home Affairs to expedite the process of grant of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and liquidate the assurance at the earliest," it said. The representative of the MHA informed the committee that the matter is being examined at the appropriate level and a decision in the matter will be taken at the earliest, it said.

Earlier report

The panel said an Implementation Report for fulfilment of the assurance was tabled in the House in August 2023, stating that the grant of statehood to J&K depended on multiple factors, and that it would be granted at an appropriate time.

The panel said the Implementation Report was examined and was "treated as partial-fulfilment of the assurance" since the grant of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is yet to be done.

BJP questions Kerala govt's nativity card

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: The BJP has questioned the decision of the Kerala government to introduce a photo-embedded nativity card in place of the certificate.

The BJP has pointed out that citizenship is a matter that comes under the purview of the Centre and hence the state government's move is mysterious.

"What is the legal validity of the proposed nativity card? Already, there is the Aadhaar Card as a valid photo identity card. So, the move to introduce nativity cards is dubious and is a waste of public money," BJP leader and former Union minister V Muraleedharan said.

Announcing the decision on Wednesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan highlighted it as a relief to those facing concerns over citizenship.

"At a time when many are struggling to prove their citizenship, it is necessary that the people should have a valid document to show that they are natives of the state. Hence, the state government is planning to introduce a permanent nativity card with a photo in place of the nativity certificate being issued now. To give legal validity to the proposed card, legislation will be passed," said Vijayan.

Train fares hike comes into effect

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Railway Ministry on Thursday officially notified a hike in train ticket prices by 1 paise per km for ordinary class beyond a journey of 215 km, and 2 paise per km for non-AC classes of mail/express trains and AC classes of all trains.

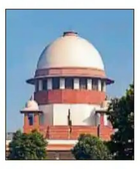
On December 21, the ministry announced its decision to increase the passenger fares from December 26.

This is the second time in a year that the ministry has revised passenger train fares. The earlier fare hike was implemented in July.

Justifying its decision, the ministry stated that the rationalising of fares has "the objective of balancing affordability for passengers and sustainability of operations".

Unnao rape case: Plea in SC against relief to ex-MLA

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS



Two women lawyers on Thursday approached the Supreme Court challenging the Delhi High Court's December 23 order granting bail to former UP MLA Kuldeep Senger in the 2017 Unnao rape case by suspending his life-term sentence pending his appeal against conviction.

Petitioners Anjali Patel and Pooja Shilpkar claimed the HC granted relief to the expelled BJP MLA without considering the facts of the case, that the trial court not only convicted him and awarded him life imprisonment but also observed that he must be in judicial custody for the rest of his natural life.

This showed that the accused might not be released from jail for the rest of his natural life without any proper reason assigned by any judicial forum, reflecting the heinous nature of the offence, they contended. "The HC has committed a grave error in law as well as on facts in granting bail/suspension of sentence to the accused, despite his serious criminal antecedents and his established involvement in the heinous offences of rape upon the victim and murder of her father."

It also contended that the HC failed to appreciate the material evidence relied upon by the prosecution, which clearly demonstrated the barbarity and brutality of the accused, coupled with his demonstrated muscle power, financial influence, and criminal propensity, as evidenced by the fact that even while the survivor's father was in judicial custody, the accused orchestrated his murder.

It claimed the HC gravely erred in law and on facts in misinterpreting the statutory definition of "public servant", while considering the bail application of the accused-respondent, who, undisputedly, was a sitting MLA at the time of commission of the offence.

Mirwaiz removes 'Hurriyat chairman' tag from X profile

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Senior separatist leader and Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Wednesday evening removed the designation "Chairman All Parties Hurriyat Conference" from his verified X profile, a move that comes against the backdrop of the separatist umbrella organisation's steady decline in the state.

The change was noticed shortly after it appeared on his account, which until recently identified him as the chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The updated bio now carries only his name, handle, location, and other basic details.

Mirwaiz, who has nearly 2.32 lakh followers on X, has not issued any statement explaining the removal, and there was no reaction from the Hurriyat or the authorities till the filing of this report.

Founded in 1993, the APHC was a coalition of political, religious, and social organisations advocating Kashmir's right to self-determination.

Senior separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

From early 1990s to late 2010's, it became the principal separatist platform in the Valley, exercising considerable street influence and serving as a political voice during prolonged periods of unrest. The Hurriyat leadership played a key role in shutdown calls, mass mobilisations, and articulating separatist positions during that phase.

Over time, however, the Hurriyat splintered and suffered from internal divisions, leadership disputes, and declining mass participation. Its influence weakened further after 2014 as New Delhi hardened its approach towards separatist groups. The decline accelerated sharply after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

The Central government has banned most of the APHC's constituent organisations in recent years, while several senior leaders have been arrested, booked under stringent laws, or withdrawn from public political activity.

The Hurriyat has not held any visible political programmes or issued joint calls for years, rendering the once-dominant conglomerate largely inactive on the ground.

At the age of 20, Mirwaiz took over as Hurriyat chairman in 1993, just over three years after the assassination of his father, Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq, who was killed in 1990.

Mirwaiz has in recent years maintained a limited public presence, focusing largely on religious sermons and statements on civil liberties and humanitarian issues.

Aravalli row escalates with Union minister-Jairam Ramesh spat

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Bhupender Yadav

Jairam Ramesh

A verbal duel between Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and his predecessor, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, on protecting the Aravallis erupted on Thursday, with Yadav asking Ramesh to check with his party colleague and former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on who destroyed the range.

"You and your coterie are rattled because we have issued a total ban on mining in the Aravallis from Gujarat to Delhi. We will not allow you, Gehlot, or anyone else in your party to plunder the sacred Aravalli range ever again. We will work for the restoration of what your party has ravaged," said the Union minister in a social media post.

"Maybe your 'environmentalist hat' would be credible if you questioned your party colleague Ashok Gehlot about who destroyed the Aravallis," he added.

The environment minister's comments come in the wake of a post by Ramesh in which the former minister said the Narendra Modi government's redefinition of the Aravallis, that went against all expert opinion, was dangerous and disastrous.

The spat comes against the backdrop of a controversial new definition of the Aravallis provided by a technical committee headed by the Union Environment Ministry and accepted by the Supreme Court for the consideration of mining.

In his post Ramesh, said, "According to the Forest Survey of India's data that is authoritative, only 8.7% of the Aravalli hills that are higher than 20 metres exceed 100 metres. If we take all Aravalli hills identified by FSI, not even 1% exceeds 100 metres."

AVIAN ENUMERATION

TN to conduct synchronised bird census

CHENNAI, DHNS

Tamil Nadu will conduct its third Synchronized Bird Census across the state on December 27 and 28, with an aim to protect and conserve the avi-faunal diversity.

The Synchronised Bird Census for the year 2025-2026 will be conducted in two phases — Wetland Bird Census (both inland and coastal wetlands) and Terrestrial Bird Census.

The Wetland Bird Census would be conducted on December 27 and 28, because the migratory bird season in Tamil Nadu generally begins with the onset of the North-East Monsoon in October and continues till April, explained officials.

"The timing is chosen to bridge the data gaps during the early part of the migratory season. The Wetland Bird Census will be conducted in a minimum of 25 locations per forest division," Srinivas R Reddy, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, said.

He said the state has implemented several flagship programmes, including Hornbill Conservation Centre and conservation initiatives, Raptor Research Foundation at Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC), and an International Bird Conservation Centre at Marakkanam.

In the state-wide bird census, experienced birdwatchers, volunteers, NGO representatives, professional photographers, and Forest Department officials will participate.

The last Census conducted in March 2025 showed Tamil Nadu had 5.52 lakh wetland birds from 397 species and 2.32 lakh terrestrial birds from 401 species, of which over 1 lakh are migratory birds.

The survey, which was conducted in March covering 934 wetland and 1,093 terrestrial locations, also recorded 26 endangered species and 17 nocturnal bird species, marking a significant achievement in conservation monitoring. Of the total birds, 49% were from coastal districts.

OPS, TTV not keen to rejoin NDA; in talks with Vijay

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

OPS

Dhinakaran

After the AMMK's T T V Dhinakaran, former chief minister O Panneerselvam's camp has also announced that it will not accept AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami as the chief-ministerial candidate of the NDA for the 2026 Assembly elections.

The OPS camp is now weighing its options — join the DMK alliance or be part of the alliance to be stitched by the TVK.

For the first time, the TVK has confirmed that it was in touch with both Dhinakaran and Panneerselvam.

The talks are being spearheaded by former AIADMK veteran K A Sengottaiyan, who is now the chief coordinator of the TVK.

If the two leaders don't rejoin the alliance, it will be a major setback for the NDA. Their presence in the TVK camp will give a much-needed boost to Vijay, especially in gaining the support of a section of Mukulathors, a dominant caste to which they belong, in the southern and central districts of Tamil Nadu.

TTV and OPS' presence in the NDA helped the combine push the AIADMK to the third slot in several Lok Sabha constituencies in southern Tamil Nadu in the 2024 elections. Their absence in the NDA is likely to further alienate the Mukulathors from the AIADMK.

Sources in the BJP told *DH* that both TTV and OPS have now upped their game by opposing Palaniswami as the chief minister candidate of NDA, which is a clear indication that they don't want to be part of the alliance.

They said both leaders fear a lack of cohesion between them and the AIADMK would bring no good to them electorally and hence there is no need to rejoin the NDA.

"Even if the BJP gets them seats from the AIADMK, the two leaders cannot win without the AIADMK cadre's support. They fear they won't get that support. We are still trying to get them on board, but we are not sure," a BJP source said.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Fare hikes without course correction

The Indian Railways, in its latest fare revision announced this week, has kept the hikes moderate and largely limited to the higher classes. Travel in AC coaches and non-AC coaches in mail and express trains will become costlier from Friday. The hike of 2 paise per km in these classes does not look very high, but this is the second revision in the year, and trains are no longer the cheap travel option they once were. There is no increase in fares for suburban services and monthly season tickets, which cover the largest segment of passengers. Ordinary-class travel has been spared – there is no hike in fares for up to 215 km. It is estimated that the Railways would earn about Rs 600 crore during the current year from the fare revision.

The Railways has cited rising operational costs as a reason for the hike. It has significantly expanded its network and operations in the last decade, leading to an overall increase in expenditure. Manpower costs have increased to Rs 1.15 lakh crore, and pension liabilities to Rs 60,000 crore. The total operational costs are estimated at Rs 2.63 lakh crore in 2024-25. There has been a focused effort to meet the increased costs by raising the volume of cargo movement and avoiding hikes in passenger fares. There is logic in the policy – as a public service organisation, the Railways has to provide the cheapest form of transport. Crores of people, including the poorest, travel by train every day on a network that links regions across the country.

Rising costs force modest train fare hikes, but safety and services remain outside the scope of change

With raised fares, however, comes greater scrutiny of passenger amenities. The Railways should significantly improve its delivery of services and ensure that the prescribed safety standards are met. Complaints about hygiene, scheduling and delays, and mismanagement have persisted for decades. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), train accidents of one type or another cause 60 deaths every day. This is an alarming number that calls for a deep review of safety protocols. Kavach, the indigenous railway safety system, has coverage of a mere 3% of the routes; the system is active in less than 1% of the trains. Training and human resources development have suffered – over three lakh vacancies are to be filled. While the allocations are not fully utilised, the wastage of funds extends the crisis. Years of inaction have resulted in a situation that warrants comprehensive change across operations. A year that saw two fare revisions can be a good place to take the turn.

BDA's plea undermines citizen rights

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's statement in the Assembly that the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will appeal against the Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority's (RERA) order directing it to register its housing projects under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act is deeply troubling. At a time when public confidence in the authority is already low, the government has chosen to defend bureaucratic privilege rather than uphold the rights of thousands of long-suffering homebuyers. The dispute arose from complaints over the much-delayed Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL). Before K-RERA, the BDA argued that it should be exempt from the Act as it is a statutory body constituted under the Bangalore Development Authority Act, 1976, and not a commercial 'promoter'. It contended that RERA's requirements – particularly rigid timelines, financial disclosures, and compensation for delays – would cripple its functioning, given the complexities of land acquisition and prolonged litigation.

These arguments were rightly rejected. In its order, K-RERA held that under Section 2(zk) of the RERA Act, any body that develops land or buildings for sale to the public qualifies as a promoter, irrespective of whether its stated objective is profit or public welfare. Crucially, the authority invoked Section 89 of the Act, which gives RERA an overriding effect over inconsistent state laws, including the BDA Act. The BDA was, therefore, directed to register the NPKL and disclose details of progress and finances. BDA's concern that RERA compliance would impose an unsustainable financial burden on it is fundamentally flawed. If the authority cannot compensate allottees for delays stretching close to a decade, it points to chronic mismanagement. RERA's requirement that 70% of buyer funds be kept in an escrow account exists precisely to prevent the diversion of allottee money to unrelated works, an accusation that has dogged the BDA for years. There is no rational basis for excluding the BDA from RERA's ambit. In substance, it operates no differently from a private developer: it advertises layouts, collects large sums from citizens, and promises basic infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity.

In the defence of bureaucratic immunity, buyers are denied transparency and accountability

While recent administrative changes under the current BDA commissioner, P Manivannan, have shown some promise, backing the appeal against RERA signals a move to preserve bureaucratic immunity and shield entrenched corruption. Bengaluru's urban governance will improve only when its principal development authority is subjected to the same standards of transparency, discipline, and legal consequence as any other promoter. Compliance with RERA is not optional; it is non-negotiable.

STATE AND SOCIETY

Rethinking governance, with citizen at the centre

Good governance is more than scheme outcomes. It is about being transparent, inclusive, and responsive

SANTOSH NARGUND

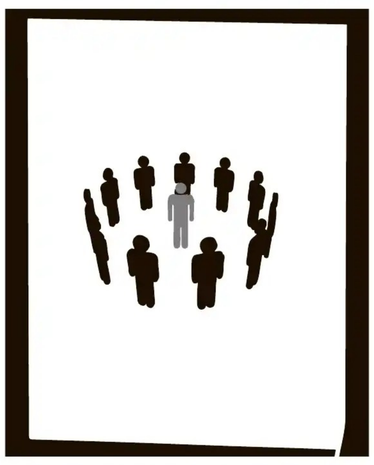
Who is governance truly designed for? As India observes the National Good Governance Day, this is the fundamental question before a rapidly transforming country aspiring to become a developed nation. Good governance can no longer be assessed only by the scale of schemes or the speed of execution. There is an urgent need to place the citizen at the centre of governance systems. A national resolve to enhance the lived experience of citizens in their interactions with the State – from panchayat to parliament, and across the life cycle, from birth to old age, spanning daily needs as well as pursuits of entrepreneurship, innovation and leisure – is the way forward. A citizen-centric governance model is key to delivering a quality of life that citizens truly deserve in a Viksit Bharat.

Over the past two to three decades, India has made significant progress in improving efficiency and citizen satisfaction in service delivery and development programmes. The adoption of citizen charters and social audits, the enactment of consumer protection measures, the Right to Information and the Right to Services, as well as digital service delivery platforms and grievance redressal forums, have all aimed to empower citizens. Yet, these initiatives have largely addressed individual dimensions of citizen experience in isolation. Neither transparency alone, nor rights-based service delivery, nor post-facto audits can, by themselves, secure sustained trust in governance. Nor can digitisation compensate for deeper structural deficiencies that inhibit citizen-centricity.

What India now needs is a systemic model of citizen-centric governance – one that applies holistically across the full spectrum of government functions, including policy framing and regulation, service delivery, and development, and across all tiers of government – from the Union and states to municipalities and panchayats. Citizen centricity is the measure of a government's ability to design, implement, and continuously improve governance initiatives to enhance quality of life and build enduring citizen trust.

Citizen-centricity cannot be introduced only at the implementation stage. It needs to be embedded across the programme lifecycle, from conception and needs assessment to design, execution, and evaluation. It must be informed, continuously, by feedback from citizens and other stakeholders. A comprehensive citizen-centric governance framework rests on five interlinked pillars: transparency, participation, accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement.

Transparency enables informed engagement. It requires governments and their agencies to proactively inform and educate citizens about initiatives in ways that enable meaningful participation, feedback, and oversight. Before designing any programme or policy, basic questions must be asked: Is the information to be shared comprehensive and coherent? Are dissemination channels



accessible to the affected communities? Information asymmetry remains one of the greatest barriers to trust. Transparency is not merely about dashboards or disclosures; it is about making information intelligible, accessible and actionable so citizens understand who decides, on what basis, and with what consequences.

Participation goes far beyond consultation meetings or feedback forms. It implies engaging citizens at every stage of the governance cycle: problem identification, planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring. Global experience and Indian practice both show that token participation breeds cynicism, while institutionalised participation builds ownership and trust. Governments must move decisively from treating people as mere beneficiaries to recognising them as partners. Ease of participation must be consciously designed into governance systems. Technology can enable participation, but it cannot substitute place-based forums such as gram sabhas, ward committees, and area sabhas, which remain indispensable.

Accountability is the bedrock of trust. When responsibilities are fragmented across multiple agencies and tiers, citizens are left unsure of who is answerable for outcomes. True accountability requires clearly defined service standards, time-bound delivery, and mechanisms through which citizens can hold both officials and elected representatives to account. Citizen-centric policies and programmes must therefore guarantee professional, timely and data-protected services that are independently verifiable.

Transformation beyond targeted programmes

Responsiveness adds a human dimension to governance. A responsive system listens early, corrects quickly, and treats citizens with dignity. Broken grievance redressal portals, unresponsive helplines, and opaque processes point to systemic design failures. Ease of access, respectful communication, effective grievance redressal, and user-friendly service design are not luxuries. As citizens experience increasingly professional services elsewhere in the 21st century, expectations from public institutions inevitably rise.

The fifth pillar – continuous improvement – ensures that citizen centricity is sustained rather than episodic. Governance systems must be capable of learning, adapting, and improving through robust evaluation frameworks that go beyond financial and output metrics to assess service quality, citizen experience, and trust. Feedback loops, citizen-led monitoring, independent performance evaluations, and outcome-based reviews must inform course correction. Good governance cannot be a destination; it must be a discipline.

These five pillars cannot stand alone unless viewed through four essential lenses: inclusion, decentralisation, institutionalisation, and technological enablement. Inclusion ensures that governance reaches the most marginalised, not merely the most vocal or digitally connected. Decentralisation brings decision-making closer to the first mile of governance: towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.

Institutionalisation embeds citizen-centric practices in laws, rules, charters, and forums, rather than individual leadership. Technology, finally, must serve as an enabler, expanding access, reducing discretion, and strengthening transparency and participation.

India's governance reforms have largely been incremental and programme-specific, delivering short-term gains without transforming the underlying relationship between the State and the citizen. A holistic citizen-centric governance paradigm is therefore essential to anchor development in world-class quality of life and citizen trust, as much as economic growth.

(The writer is the Director of Policy Engagement at Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

A Christmas angel in tweeds

I love this time of the year for all the joy it brings

PADMA SASTRY

Auntie Miss. A petite lady, immaculately dressed in a black skirt and a crisp white blouse and often a tweed jacket, with closely bobbed hair with silver streaks in her otherwise dark hair, held neatly in place by a hair net. I saw her every school day, six days a week.

She would greet every child at their first stop, in front of the two big wrought iron gates that stood wide open, where I often imagined being swallowed into a world called school. She never ever addressed a child by their actual name but always by an endearment of sorts. She would first inspect the uniform, the shoes for a proper shine and the socks with no gaping holes, and further ensure its intended use of full coverage to the kneecap. She would then gently ask us to stretch out our hands. She would squint at the little nails for their length and presence of any unwanted matter underneath. Next came the inspection of the hair. If for boys, it was to be clipped to reveal full ears. And for girls, if the hair was not bobbed and just under the ears, it would have to be braided and pinned up. No fashion statement this was, and no ordinary disciplinarian was she either.

I came to know her by her real name many years later. Mrs Paul.

I unfailingly remember her every Christmas because it was she who lit the spirit of Christmas in me. A tradition that she and her family, who immigrated to the Bengaluru Cantonment many generations ago, followed in its entirety. That the Lord's Prayer was sung at our daily school assembly did not in any way ebb the freshness of Christmas Day at school. The day meant festivities, including singing familiar carols, a skit depicting the story of Christmas and a party sweetened with cake and biscuits. A Christmas tree stood majestically in the corner of the principal's office.

Auntie Miss strutted around excitedly dressed in red and green, a bright gold angel pinned on her lapel that, she would tell me upon my enquiring look, was always there to spread mercy. She would transport me to her own church as she animatedly described the mass, the prayers, the delicious food, and the gifts they exchanged among the family. These stories were to become real to me after my first visit to a church with her and many more to follow.

I fell in love with her from my first day of kindergarten. With the generous, perfect-white pearly smile, her gentle yet firm reassuring hug and that unforgettable sing-song greeting, she welcomed me. She was there for me every single day.

I love this time of the year, for all the joy it brings me straight from the heart of Auntie Miss to mine. A blissful warmth melding with the dancing flames of my own fireplace, the gently flickering candles, and the swaying shadows floating with my own happy memories.

Merry Christmas, Mrs Paul!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bangladesh turmoil: India's response falls short

The situation in Bangladesh is a matter of grave concern. The atrocities against minorities have become a daily occurrence, and the lynching of a Hindu by a frenzied mob for alleged blasphemy is extremely alarming. The country is in a state of anarchy, with the interim government of Muhammad Yunus either unable or unwilling to handle the volatile situation. The government's lack of legitimacy is exacerbating the problem. The atrocities in Bangladesh are having a ripple effect in India, with demonstrations in various parts of the country. The Indian leadership has not responded adequately to the situation. India has options to protect minorities in Bangladesh, including extending the Citizenship Amendment Act to grant citizenship to persecuted minorities.
K R Jayaprakash Rao, Mysuru

Measured action vital

The escalating tensions between India and Bangladesh require calm reflection and measured action. Any deterioration in bilateral ties will inevitably create opportunities for external actors to exploit divisions. Both sides should manage protests peacefully and maintain security, public services, and people-to-people connections. Historical bonds and shared interests demand de-escalation and rebuilding trust.
Q A Qasmi, Mumbai

Strengthen eco governance

The Supreme Court's intervention in the Aravalli mining issue highlights the persistent failure of environmental governance. Judicial intervention becomes necessary due to weak enforcement of environmental laws. Courts can temporarily halt damage, but science-based policy-making is needed. Environmental protection requires political will, institutional clarity, and accountable enforcement.
Vismaya Vivek, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

The state also has certain responsibilities; the central government can't give everything. In Karnataka, they are looting central funds, so why should the Centre give more?
H D Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

Power lacks moral or principles. It only has interests.
Horacio Castellanos Moya

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

A green switch in China's energy order

Grid reform and increased endorsement of renewables are set to steer the country's energy transition

BHUMIKA SEVKANI

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (FYP) comes with a strong vision for greening the economy. In the recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, green development has been mentioned as a 'defining feature of Chinese modernisation', and priority will be given to reducing pollution at source. Non-industrial sectors will increasingly move towards phasing out the use of coal, aimed at reducing the dependence on imports to meet the energy consumption demand.

Renewable energy sources that are likely to see increased investments are wind and solar plant installations, as well as pumped-storage hydropower (PSH). In terms of future technologies, hydrogen energy and nuclear fusion energy will be explored. However, the recommendations do not mention green hydrogen specifically.

Solar has been leading RE installations since 2020 in China. The installed capacity of solar power plants has increased from 253.86 GW in 2020 to 887.10 GW in 2024. Wind energy, on the other hand, has only seen an increase of about 85%. While solar energy's share went up from 28.32% to 48.81%, the share of wind energy installations reduced from 31% to 28%. This can be attributed to relatively higher costs, longer lead times, and higher curtailment rates for wind energy projects. Amid the low installation rates and an oversupply of wind turbines, key Chinese firms in the sector faced losses in 2023, until the leading firms agreed to consolidate the industry.

During the upcoming FYP period, the wind energy industry is expected to pick up pace as the solar equipment suppliers face overcapacity. Chinese firms have also been leading in wind turbine innovation and project implementation. Additionally, wind power firms collectively published a Beijing Declaration on Wind Energy 2.0 in October, setting a target of 1.3 TWh installed capacity by 2030. This is a significant increase from the previous target set for 2030 – an installed capacity of 800 GW. China has also set a new NDC target for 2035: a combined installed capacity of wind and solar at 3.6 TW. The consolidation of the industry and an increased focus on grid infrastructure will favour the growth of wind energy in the FYP period.

The Central Committee directs that plans be developed for PSH to increase the safety and resilience of the power grid. PSH can fill in the supply gap when variable sources are not able to meet the demand, stabilising the grid and the market as well. It saw an increase in installed capacity from 31.49 GW in 2020 to 58.69 GW in 2024.

Lastly, broad directions on energy transition focus on improving transmission infrastructure to cover regional demands. This includes connecting both small and distributed energy resources, and large RE farms to the grid and consumers. Energy backbone corridors are included to 'boost high-quality development of clean energy' that can connect renewable-rich provinces to nearby economic clusters.

Market reforms for RE projects will also be accelerated, which will impact different RE sources unevenly. The reforms will reward fast-delivering, flexible sources that are proximate to demand centres. Therefore, large onshore/offshore wind farms will experience losses or require pricing support, whereas distributed, small wind or solar producers, and PSH producers will stand to benefit in times of higher demand.

Smart grids and microgrids remain a continued priority, carrying over their emphasis from the 14th FYP. The State Grid Corporation budgeted $88.7 billion for power grid investment in 2025. As of May 2025, China's industrial sector has approximately 300 RE-powered microgrids operational or under construction. China's RE growth will continue, with better grid integration. However, the move to market pricing creates uncertainty for new projects, and specific targets will be crucial for guiding advancements in RE technology and demand.

India's takeaways

For India and the world, this transition will mean an increased dependence on Chinese RE equipment. As China accelerates domestic deployment and reduces its fossil fuel dependence, it is also positioning itself at the centre of RE supply chains. This was evident in solar panels, and now, increasingly witnessed in wind turbines.

The focus of Chinese policy on a specific technology not only accelerates decarbonisation and lowers cost for the global supply chain, but also subsequently reshapes energy trade. If successfully implemented, Chinese policies and implementation standards can also shape global norms in RE deployment. For India, the challenge lies in balancing technological advancement while ensuring the competitiveness of domestic RE industries against Chinese imports and maintaining the economic viability of RE projects.

(The writer is a research analyst with the Indo-Pacific Studies Programme at the Takshashila Institution)

Does renaming MGNREGA address rural distress?

STEVENSON JACOB AND KARAMALA AREESH KUMAR

The Union government's move to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and increase the number of guaranteed workdays has resurfaced an old debate: What does renaming a welfare programme truly accomplish for the people it is meant to serve? When political contestation is stripped away, the main concerns lie in social acceptance, financial effectiveness, and the quality of service delivery. Replacing the current framework, the parliament has passed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission [Gramin] (VB-G RAM G) Bill.

The primary objective of this bill is to provide wage employment through public works in rural areas. With this action, a "demand-driven framework" will give way to a "supply-driven scheme". The original National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, announced in 2005, was conceived as a rights-based protection system for rural households willing to perform unskilled manual labour.

The proposed renaming fits a longer pattern. The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan was earlier rebranded as the Swachh Bharat Mission, accompanied by new branding and expanded sanitation goals. Rural LPG connections, initially offered under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitrak project, were subsequently included in the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, with a change in name and emphasis. In the housing sector, Indira Awaas Yojana was renamed Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin, once again combining design modifications with a new title. A large share of central initiatives has followed this trajectory, shifting from names associated with particular leaders or generic sectoral terms to flagships carrying the "Pradhan Mantri" brand.

Renaming schemes, even when budgets for benefits are maintained or enhanced, has clear financial implications. A nationwide change in terminology necessitates new workplace signage, redesigned logos, revised letterheads and forms, and modifications to management information systems, mobile apps, and portals. Panchayat offices, block development offices, banks, and post offices must invest time and administrative effort to update records and software entries and retrain employees where necessary. These are not striking expenses, but they are real, because every rebranding exercise diverts funds and personnel time away from activities such as social audits, payment processing and project supervision.

There is also a government dimension. Disagreements between the Centre and states over how scheme names and logos appear on signboards and official materials have, in recent years, hindered approvals and even triggered fund stoppages. In 2023, the Union government issued a warning that if states rebrand centrally sponsored schemes such as Ayushman Bharat or PM Awas Yojana under their own names, central releases would be suspended until the original branding and terminology were restored. When this happens, projects and payments on the ground are delayed, as implementing agencies must redo utilisation certificates and compliance reports. From an economic perspective, every renaming cycle carries an opportunity cost, as resources spent on rebranding could otherwise be deployed for better technology, wider coverage, or improved infrastructure.

Large programmes also depend heavily on years of established name recognition. "NREGA *ka kaam*", which stands for dependable work under a legally guaranteed programme, has been a part of village vocabulary for nearly two decades. Renaming such a familiar scheme inevitably creates a transition period. During this phase, workers may be uncertain whether the earlier programme continues, whether rules have changed, or whether re-registration is required. In low-literacy settings, even small ambiguities can discourage participation.

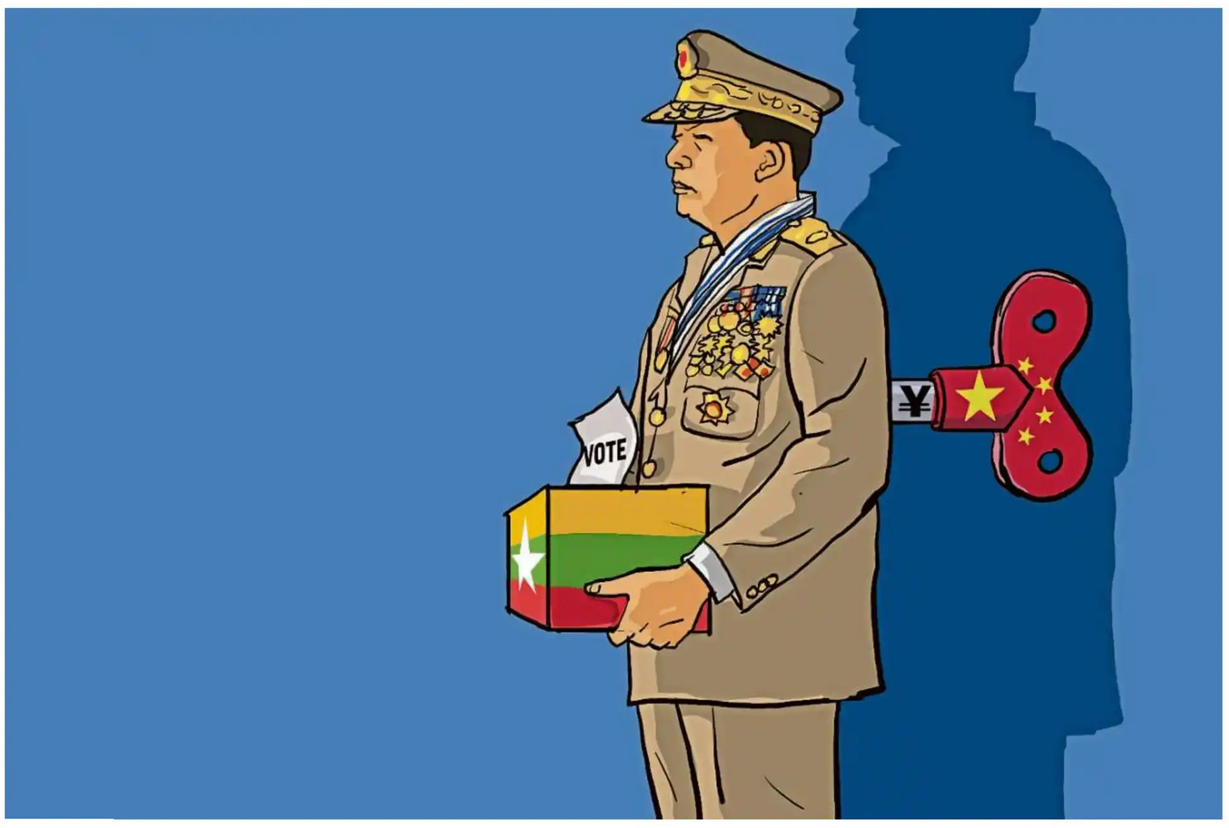
Official concerns over the scheme names highlight a real issue. Inconsistent titles across states can weaken accountability and reduce understanding of entitlements. When some states attempted to rename Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres, the Union minister cautioned that such changes could lead to closure if people did not recognise the service. Schemes like health insurance, scholarships and others are sensitive to this kind of misunderstanding and can lower participation. Renaming also strains the administrative capacity because digital systems and financial agreements all link centrally sponsored programmes to specific titles. Any changes would cause approvals and payments to be delayed while officials make adjustments. This increases coordination costs if the deeper problems of underfunding and delays are not addressed.

The MGNREGA debate reinforces one basic notion: outcomes depend on designs; not labels. If adequately funded and implemented, the increase in the number of guaranteed workdays can significantly enhance rural earnings. Changing the acronym does not increase employment or wage payments. Timely payments, practical and climate-resilient assets, improved planning, and complementary programmes for urban and green jobs are more important. For communities, the core question is: Are jobs available, are wages paid on time and are services easily accessible? Names only matter if they help people utilise their rights, and performance alone counts.

(Stevenson is a research assistant, and Areesh is the head, Department of International Relations, Peace and Public Policy, St Joseph's University, Bengaluru)

The vote in Myanmar, widely seen as a sham, is a bid for legitimacy by the military government. It is also a way for Beijing to exert its influence there

SUI-LEE WEE AND DAVID PIERSON



DH ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

Why China is backing elections in Myanmar

Five years ago, the United States played a pivotal role in Myanmar's general election. Washington assisted with voter education programs, supporting civil society in the name of strengthening global democracy and countering China's influence in the region.

It was one of the few truly contested elections in Myanmar, which has largely been ruled by its military since independence from Britain in 1948. Voters delivered a decisive win for the civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, but within months the generals again seized power, and Washington downgraded diplomatic ties with the nation.

Now election season has returned in Myanmar, as voters start casting ballots on Sunday. The polls, which will not include many politicians opposed to the junta and will only be held in areas controlled by the military, have been called a sham by the United Nations. But they have a surprising backer — China, a one-party state.

For Beijing, Myanmar is a crucial link to the Indian Ocean. China has committed funds worth billions of dollars for infrastructure projects in its smaller neighbour, including highways and a deep seaport. But the coup in 2021 and an ensuing civil war that has wracked Myanmar have threatened those plans.

In a remarkable statement last year, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, called on Myanmar to achieve domestic peace with an end to the fighting and "national governance based on the will of the people."

China has promised to provide technological assistance and funding so that the junta can compile voter lists. The irony of a one-party state promoting elections is not lost on observers. Beijing views the poll as the best way to establish a semi-legitimate government in Myanmar that some countries may agree to grit their teeth and negotiate with. China, along with Belarus and Russia, are some of the handful of countries sending election observers.

"It's a little bit of a joke to think that the Chinese are trying to shepherd election observation missions," said Yun Sun, director of the China Program at the Stimson Centre in Washington. "But that just attests to the Chinese effort to window-dress this election, to make it look as pretty and as legitimate as it can."

Beijing has supplied arms to both the warring junta and the rebel armies to balance its interests. It has also used its leverage over some armed groups to pressure them to hand back territory to the military. Now its hope is that the election will lead to a semblance of stability that would allow it to revive its stalled deep-sea port and oil and gas pipelines on Myanmar's coast. These projects were meant to reduce China's reliance on the Strait of Malacca, which Beijing fears the United States could someday blockade.

Ko Ko Gyi, the chair of the People's Party in Myanmar, said Chinese officials told him in Beijing last year that "Myanmar's peace and stability directly affect China's interests." His political party was one of many in Myanmar invited to China for all-expenses-paid "study tours" in recent years.

Ko Ko Gyi, once one of Myanmar's most prominent pro-democracy activists, said that even though China is clearly pursuing its own interests, it is "close, influential and willing to engage, while the U.S. remains on the fence."

"Washington talks about values, but Beijing brings leverage," he said. "That is why Myanmar keeps leaning toward China, because America offers rhetoric, not commitment."

But ballots will only be cast in junta-controlled areas, or less than half of the country. Some rebel groups as well as the shadow National Unity Government, a pro-democracy movement, have urged a boycott of the election.

"It is absolutely impossible for Myanmar to become stable or for any meaningful political space to emerge simply by holding an election, as China appears to expect," said Nay Phone Latt, a spokesperson for the shadow government. "Even if a so-called civilian government were to emerge through such an election, it would still be the same military coup leaders in civilian clothes who would continue to rule."

Members of the pro-military party that is expected to win the elections, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, have travelled to China five times since 2021 for meetings with Communist Party officials.

"They explained how they systematically built that one-party system, enabling them to govern the country without rivals," said Thaung Shwe, the director-general of the Myanmar party. "They also discussed how to achieve desired outcomes in elections and how to manage the process to ensure a favourable result.

"They shared ideas on how a democratic system can still function under centralised control."

While Myanmar's military will still control the levers of power, the elections could lead to a return to a nominally civilian government or a shake-up among the military elites. It is uncertain what role the junta chief, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, will play after the elections.

"Even if those who form the next government are the same individuals from the current military government, the system they operate in will change," said Thet Thet Khine, founder of the People's Pioneer Party, which comprises former military officials and businesspeople. "That means there will be a shift toward a more democratic path."

China, she said, is helping Myanmar "move one step closer toward the democracy that our people desire."

Peng Nian, director of the Hong Kong Research Centre for Asian Studies, compared this election to the 2010 poll, which was seen as a facade to cement military rule but eventually paved the way for the West to engage with Thein Sein, a former general who enacted reforms.

"Regardless of what the West thinks, it is at least a democratisation process," Peng said.

Ultimately, the veneer of legitimacy that China provides in this election could help the Myanmar junta entrench its power and further the military's idea of a so-called "disciplined democracy."

"The last thing China wants is for there to be a full-scale revolution that advances systemic change and pushes the Myanmar military out," said Jason Tower, the former country director for Myanmar at the United States Institute of Peace, a nonpartisan research organisation.

But despite the apparent bonhomie, the Myanmar generals remain suspicious of China. They dislike China's role in funding the rebel armies in Myanmar's borderlands and are wary of over-reliance on its giant neighbour. The country that Min Aung Hlaing has visited the most is not China but Russia.

China has also signalled its displeasure with the general, given the instability on the border, the junta's failure to shut down the scam centres that have ensnared thousands of Chinese victims, and an attack on the Chinese consulate in Mandalay last year.

Analysts say these factors provide an opening for the West to engage with Myanmar, where many want to balance relations between the world's two major superpowers.

"The international community needs to do something differently in Myanmar," said Morgan Michaels, a research fellow for Southeast Asian security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think tank. "But if they keep waiting and doing nothing, then the country is going to continue to fragment and be pulled closer and closer into China's orbit."

Myanmar's coming election lays bare a reversal of roles and a vacuum of resolve. As Washington stays cautious and value-heavy but leverage-light, China's transactional engagement fills the space — despite mutual mistrust and competing interests. The result is an election that is unlikely to bring peace or democracy, but may still harden Myanmar's drift into a "disciplined democracy" shaped more by geopolitical convenience than by the consent of its people.

The New York Times

A retreat from disability jurisprudence

ARUSHI SINGH

Courts often lean on and develop existing jurisprudential principles to shed light on matters of public significance. Every now and then, when such issues are thrust into mainstream public discourse, one hopes for a deeper judicial engagement with the questions at stake. Failure to do so risks disrupting the existing legal framework and creating inconsistencies. A recent incident did just that, undermining the court's past wisdom.

This deviation was reflected in a recent Supreme Court order, underscoring the significance of adhering to and building upon established jurisprudential principles. The case made headlines when comedian Samay Raina made offensive jokes targeting persons with visual disabilities and infants with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a rare genetic disorder. In the matter, the Court directed the drafting of guidelines "which would adequately protect the interests of all parties, without impinging upon the individual rights, dignity, honour, and respect." More recently, the Court addressed the creation of a fund to provide financial aid for persons with SMA. While the respondents agreed to raise funds, the Court remarked that through genuine remorse and commitment, they could leverage their platform to boost publicity for the cause.

Though hailed as a symbol of retributive justice, upon closer scrutiny, this order suffers from numerous incoherencies and legal pitfalls. It addresses disability justice only at a surface level, which is ironic considering the thorough examination of such concerns by the Supreme Court earlier.

Last year, the court navigated similar challenges in the case of *Nipun Malhotra v. Sony Pictures Films India Pvt Ltd* and made strict observations about the depiction of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the media.

Malhotra eloquently distinguished between disabling humour, which demeans and perpetuates stereotypes about PwDs, and disability humour, which challenges conventional notions and societal perceptions of disability. The Court reiterated that speech and expression further marginalising and disenfranchising PwDs, will not enjoy the full protection of Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. Although the Court stopped short of issuing guidelines to restrict content contravening the RPwD Act and the Constitution, stating that it could not enter the domain of policymaking, the Bench created a nine-point framework on the representation of PwDs in media. This landmark judgment, authored by then CJI Justice Chandrachud, established jurisprudence on the imagery of persons with disabilities in media and the use of humour that entrenched attitudes toward marginalised social groups.

The *Malhotra* judgment was the first of its kind to bring the issue of stigmatisation of persons with disabilities in the media into sharp focus.

Conversely, the order in *Raina*'s case raises concerns on numerous counts. A deeper engagement with the framework laid down in the *Malhotra* judgment could have fostered greater judicial coherence towards the drafting of the guidelines.

In *Malhotra*, the court recognised the need to prevent discrimination against PwDs, due to its disproportionate impact on their dignity and identity, subjecting them to social ostracisation. From that standard, the *Raina* order is a disturbing disappointment. Here, the court appears to diverge from the rationale of *Malhotra*, framing discrimination based on disability as a matter of charity rather than a deep and pervasive societal issue. Rather than deliberating upon the systemic and structural exclusion faced by persons with disabilities on a daily basis, the courts' insistence on creating and sustaining funds for persons with SMA regrettably treats the issue as a one-off incident.

In *Raina*, the respondents sought court's permission to invite persons with SMA on their platform to raise awareness and showcase their stories. The court granted the same. However, such appearances reinforce the charity model, situating persons with disabilities as objects of inspiration or sympathy, directly subverting the dignity-based jurisprudence articulated in *Malhotra*.

Ultimately, *Samay Raina* neither builds upon nor adheres to the path laid down in *Malhotra*. On the contrary, it alarmingly undermines the law established there.

Disability jurisprudence is still in its infancy in India, with courts continually dispensing new interpretations and clarifications of the barely decade-old legislation. The present scenario thus necessitates interconnectedness with the existing legal principles and established frameworks. *Ad hoc* adjudication of matters strung together with threads of similar shades will not further the purpose of the law.

(The writer teaches law at the O P Jindal Global University, Sonipat)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: DECEMBER 1975

'Grihalakshmi' scheme inaugurated

New Delhi, Dec. 25
A new life insurance policy, the "Grihalakshmi" policy, aimed at providing lifelong financial support to housewives, was inaugurated here today by Finance Secretary H. N. Ray. In a message on the occasion, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi welcomed the idea of introducing the Grihalakshmi policy specifically for non-earning married women and hoped that women in large numbers would take advantage of the new scheme.

25 YEARS AGO: DECEMBER 2000

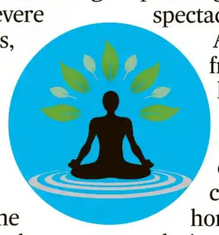
Vajpayee launches poverty alleviation schemes

New Delhi, Dec 25
On the occasion of his 76th birthday, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today launched three programmes from his house here. They are the Rs 60,000-crore Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana; Antyodaya Anna Yojana, an ambitious scheme for ensuring food security involving an annual subsidy of Rs 2,300 crore; and the Netaji Subash Saksharata Mission aimed at eradicating poverty and illiteracy.

OASIS | MEERA SESHADRI

Sparkling sunshine in sunset years

This stunning human, with singular qualities, is now just seventy-five years young! He was our chemistry professor, who had a profound penchant for his subject, when I was pursuing a degree in pure sciences at NMKRV Women's College, Bengaluru. There was diligence and delightful precision with which he delivered his lectures. In fact, his knowledge was so deep that he could incessantly go on and on, imparting all possible information involved in the day's topic. Beyond the syllabus, one would also see him spearheading other sundry college activities, seamlessly managing them, sans even small glitches. He had such a sonorous voice that whenever there were some silly squabbles among students snowballing into severe scuffles, he'd, within seconds, have them all silenced and subdued by his stentorian tones.



Cut to the present. Ten days ago, while talking to him over the telephone, I could tacitly sense, by his tone and tenor, even today, he has the same tenacity and tonnes of verve in living a totally holistic life. Successfully running his own tutorials in his spare time, he simply basks in being swamped by sheer bliss amidst his sprawling farmland, surrounded by spectacular nature.

And, with a circle of close friends constantly calling him on his cell phone, he cherishes having cosy chats, exchanging copious info centred around countless current matters. Once he gets home, with all gusto, he revels in glorious moments with his grandchildren, having enormous fun. Being massively fit, he has managed to keep myriad physical and mental ailments at bay. His heart of titanium, high-octane energy levels, and humongous zest to enjoy life to the hilt—all highly belies his age.

It is often said that "age is just a number." The inference here being, if the inner mind/body is incredibly fit, then the age becomes inconsequential. Well, regardless of one's age, when we try treading on hitherto untravelled tracks, taking part in all terrific activities, and bestowing titanic joy, only then can we testify to the truth in the above tenet. After all, adding years to life is miserably ageing, while adding life to years is marvellously growing!

Top Maoist leader with Rs 1.1 crore bounty among 6 killed in Odisha

Ganesh Uike was the chief of banned outfit in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, PTI

Top Maoist leader Ganesh Uike, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.1 crore on his head, was among six red rebels killed in gun battles with security forces in Odisha's Kandhamal district, police said on Thursday.

CPI(Maoist) central committee member Uike was the chief of the banned outfit in Odisha, said Sanjeeb Panda, an ADG rank officer heading anti-Naxal operations in the state.

Two Maoists from Chhattisgarh were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in Gumma forest in Belghar police station area on Wednesday night. Fresh gun battles took place in a forest in Chakapad police station area on Thursday morning, in which four other Maoists, including Uike, were killed.

"Four Maoists were killed in the gunfight. One of them was identified as 69-year-old Ganesh Uike, who is also known by his aliases Pakka Hanumantu, Rajesh Tiwari, Chamru and Rupa. He was a native of Pullemala village under Chendur mandal in Telangana's Nalgonda district," Panda said.

The identity of the other three Naxals, including two women, was yet to be ascertained, the officer said.

FAST FACTS

- Ganesh Uike, also known as Pakka Hanumantu, Rajesh Tiwari, Chamru and Rupa, hailed from Pullemala village in Telangana's Nalgonda district.
- He assumed charge of Odisha operations in Dec 2024 after heading the Karnataka-Kerala-Tamil Nadu south regional bureau.
- Promoted in 2020, he served on the central committee and operated across Chhattisgarh until November 2024.

'Major Operation'

Taking to X, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said, "In a major operation in Kandhamal, Odisha, 6 Naxalites, including Central Committee Member Ganesh Uike, have been neutralised so far. With this major breakthrough, Odisha stands at the threshold of becoming completely free from Naxalism. We are resolved to eliminate Naxalism before the 31st of March 2026."

The Naxals killed on Wednesday night were identified as area committee member Bari alias Rakesh, and dalam member Amrit, both from Chhattisgarh, a senior police officer said, adding they carried a cumulative bounty of Rs 23.65 lakh on their heads.

Out for tea, teacher shot dead on AMU campus in UP

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Unidentified assailants shot dead a schoolteacher inside the campus of the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in Uttar Pradesh.

According to sources, Danish Ali was sprayed with bullets by two masked, motorbike-borne assailants on Wednesday night near the AMU library while he was taking a walk with friends.

The incident occurred after 9 pm. Ali had gone to the AMU canteen for tea, part of his daily routine, sources said.

Police said Ali, a resident of Dibai in Bulandshahr district, was a former student of the AMU and that his parents were also associated with the university as faculty members.

Ali was a computer science teacher at the ABK Boys School, affiliated with the university.

Police said the security guards, who were a few metres away, rushed to the spot after hearing the gunshots and found Ali lying on the road in a pool of blood. He was rushed to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

Police suspect old enmity behind the killing. A case has been registered and an investigation is underway. A senior police official said teams had been formed to trace the assailants. Police are scanning the CCTV footage to identify the culprits. Security has been tightened on the campus.

The victim hailed from a political family. His grandfather was a former MLA and a Congress leader, sources said.

Kerala CM links Sabarimala gold theft to Sonia; Cong irked

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

The political row over the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple gold heist escalated when Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan referred to a photograph of key accused Unnikrishnan Potti meeting AICC leader Sonia Gandhi.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the heist reached a crucial point as the links of a person involved in antique smuggling came into focus.

Looking to counter criticisms over the arrest of CPM leaders in the heist and against the Left Front government overall, Vijayan on Wednesday cited widely-circulated images of the key accused — Bengaluru-based Malayali Unnikrishnan Potti — and Ballari-based jeweller Gowardhan with Sonia Gandhi.

Congress MPs Adoor Prakash and Anto Antony were also seen in those pictures, which were believed to have been taken in 2019.

Vijayan asked the Congress to clarify the links between the heist-accused and its leaders.

Prakash said on Sunday that he knew Potti as he was involved in the Sabarimala temple-related activities and charity works, but didn't know about his fraudulent operations. He also said that he did not arrange Potti's meeting with Sonia Gandhi.

"Since I was in Delhi at that time, I also happened to be present when Potti met Sonia Gandhi," he said.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala joined Prakash in urging Vijayan to reveal the conversation between him (Vijayan) and Potti, as seen in another widely-circulated picture.

CPM state secretary M V Govindan said the picture could be a manipulated one, made using AI technology.

SIT makes progress

On the legal side, the special investigation team (SIT) probing the gold heist reportedly quizzed a Tamil Nadu-based person suspected to be involved in antique smuggling

This came after an NRI businessman told the team about his suspected involvement in the heist.

Ban on women using smartphones in Rajasthan withdrawn

JODHPUR, PTI: Village elders in Rajasthan's Jalore district have withdrawn a ban imposed on women using smartphones after the decision faced opposition in several places.

At a meeting of the panchas (village elders) on Thursday in Gazipur village, the elders unanimously decided to withdraw the ban, saying it was taken with children's welfare, but was "misunderstood".

In a meeting of the Chaudhary community of Sundhamata Patti on December 21, the daughters and daughters-in-law from 15 villages were banned from using smartphones from January 26. Women were allowed only keypad phones for making calls.

According to the order, school-going girls could use mobile phones for studies only inside their homes and were not permitted to carry them to wedding ceremonies, social functions, or neighbours' houses.

Another member said that the community had a programme at Sundha Mata, where women complained that their children were spending excessive time on smartphones after returning from school.

The ban was imposed following the suggestions that women should not use smartphones, he said, adding that no one was bound to follow it. "Cases of cyber fraud are occurring daily, and women and girls are facing exploitation. That is why one month was given to observe the situation. If everyone had found it acceptable, it would have been implemented from January 26, but people misunderstood it."

MISCELLANY

◆COMICS◆

Blondie

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

KIDS AND PARENTS ARE ALWAYS ARGUING ABOUT SOMETHING
BUT KIDS HAVE THE ADVANTAGE
THEY CAN WEAR THE PARENTS DOWN
KIDS HAVE BETTER BENCH STRENGTH!

Marvin

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

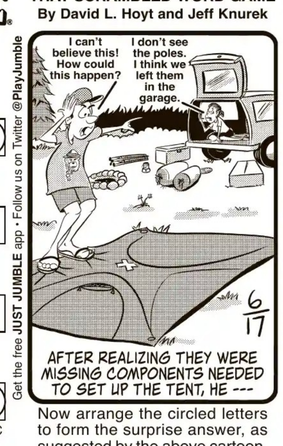
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ITNNH

CITDH

FICPYA

RTOFEG



AFTER REALIZING THEY WERE MISSING COMPONENTS NEEDED TO SET UP THE TENT, HE ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FLUFF LOBBY BATTER SPOKEN
Answer: They were having a garage sale and hoped their neighbors would — STOP "BUY"

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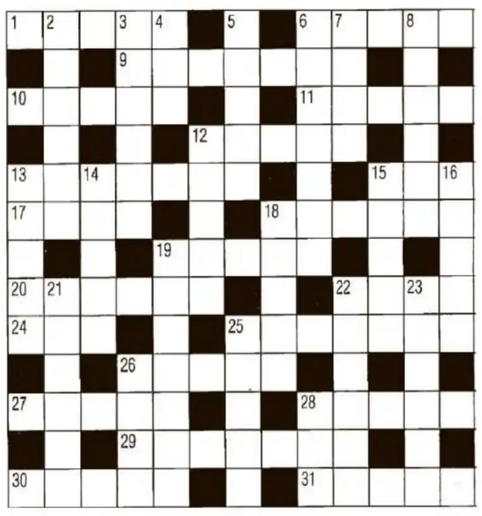
CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12318



CRYPTIC

ACROSS

1 Could it be a job to play outside the Nag's Head? (5)
6 Make a declaration in bad taste (5)
9 Readily suggests hesitation in computing the tally (7)
10 Can it keep one's chin a bit warm in bed? (5)
11 Impulses it's good to be sure about, maybe (5)
12 Little chap with a deep down love of treasure (5)
13 Shown the way to supply a good lot to the editor (7)
15 Feeling sweaty, Thomas started changing (3)
17 Cats and dogs going north by air, possibly (4)
18 Can one eat it out of celerity? (6)
19 Slander can be a sort of test (5)
20 Does well when she's out to get in! (6)
22 Not all one hears (4)
24 The turf is so, to many (3)
25 Gave a fellow a date, possibly (7)
26 A certain amount of explicitness is quite OK (5)
27 Girl in the song (5)
28 More likely to scratch than purr? (5)
29 Apparently it floats around at Minehead! (7)
30 Arranger of fetes in Twelfth Night (5)
31 Softly drop a chap in the river (5)

DOWN

2 Had she a morning with Charles Lamb? (6)
3 Slang for a vessel that's almost sunk (6)
4 Senior in one's schooldays (3)
5 Very nice amount of money (5)
6 Lumbers around in one's sleep (7)
7 Have you a fat chance of carrying a spare one? (4)
8 Shaking, start trembling a bit more (6)
12 Tiny life-forms one finds around geraniums (5)
13 That journalistic crowd (5)
14 Black and blue (5)
15 Humble worker in hotel management (5)
16 Written out of petty pedantry? (5)
18 See a boat wrecked by an explorer (5)
19 Barber's place in a southeastern French town (7)
21 Roache, turned poet (6)
22 Sausage seasoned with much salt, friend (6)
23 On TV, Mrs, it's somewhere near Wimbledon (6)
25 Do fully, just the same (5)
26 A high figure, frequently (4)
28 Could you do better than wear one? (3)

ACROSS

1 Inexpensive (5)
6 Chimes (5)
9 Hunted (7)
10 Split (5)
11 Wash out (5)
12 Respond (5)
13 Neighbourhoods (7)
15 Finish (3)
17 Not at home (4)
18 Employ (6)
19 Inclined (5)
20 World-wide (6)
22 Yield (4)
24 Slippery fish (3)
25 Tinier (7)
26 Stomach (5)
27 Step (5)
28 Use (5)
29 Joy (7)
30 Salivate (5)
31 Attempted (5)

DOWN

2 Empty (6)
3 Fight (6)
4 Cooking vessel (3)
5 Hell (5)
6 In every hundred (3,4)
7 Revise (4)
8 Being beaten (6)
12 Insurgent (5)
13 Big (5)
14 Xmas song (5)
15 Artist's stand (5)
16 Dissuade (5)
18 Foe (5)
19 Of the side (7)
21 Character (6)
22 Smart (6)
23 Determine (6)
25 Roofing tile (5)
26 Ballpoint pen (4)
28 Craft (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12317

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 4, Though 7, Side-s-how 8, A-verse 10, Degas 13, Mien 14, Evel (Kni-evel) 15, Puns 16, Beg 17, Bias 19, TI-ed 21, Band-stand 23, Bond 24, E-ase 26, So(pp)y 27, Idly 29, Phew 32, Tars 33, Stash 34, Divine 35, Accounts 36, Jetsam.
DOWN: 1, A-side 2, Adage 3, Us-ES 4, Twain 5, O-pen 6, G-ash-ed 9, Vestas 11, Eva (Ave.) 12, Alb-an 13, Mus-sels 15, Pad 16, Bed 18, In-Dia-n 20, Inept 21, Boy 22, Tay 23, B-ovine 25, Ye-S 28, Dream 30, Haunt 31, Whist 32, Tips 33, SN-O-W.

EASY

ACROSS: 4, Tights 7, Antelope 8, Acacia 10, Tenet 13, Brow 14, Seer 15, Bass 16, Flu 17, Rail 19, True 21, Hobgoblin 23, Purr 24, Nays 26, Ire 27, Open 29, Edam 32, Mary 33, Arena 34, Tirade 35, Economic 36, Reason.
DOWN: 1, Halts 2, Stone 3, Flat 4, Tears 5, Gnaw 6, Trifle 9, Costly 11, Eel 12, Error 13, Baloney 15, Big 16, Fun 18, Abroad 20, Riser 21, Hue 22, Ban 23, Praise 25, Dan 28, Preen 30, Deems 31, March 32, Mars 33, Aunt.

◆SU-DO-KU-6787◆

2		6			4		7	
	9		8	1				
		3					9	
		2			9			
7		9				5		8
			2			1		
	5					9		
				3	8		1	
	7		9			4		2

hard

SOLUTION TO 6786

6	8	2	4	7	9	1	5	3
4	5	7	3	1	8	6	9	2
3	9	1	6	5	2	7	4	8
5	3	4	1	2	6	8	7	9
2	6	8	7	9	5	3	1	4
1	7	9	8	3	4	5	2	6
7	4	3	2	6	1	9	8	5
8	1	5	9	4	3	2	6	7
9	2	6	5	8	7	4	3	1

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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E1 I1 T1 N1 W4 S1 T1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 1

E1 S1 N1 R1 O1 G2 A1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 2

T1 R1 N1 S1 I1 I1 O1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 3

R1 E1 O1 T1 K5 D2 S1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 4

PAR SCORE 205-215
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

C3 A1 C3 H4 E1 S1
I1 N1 S1 A1 N1 E1
R1 O1 O1 F4 E1 R1
R1 A1 G2 W4 O1 R1 T1

RACK 1 = 21
RACK 2 = 6
RACK 3 = 9
RACK 4 = 72
JUDD'S TOTAL 108

PAR SCORE 70-80

HITORI-3241

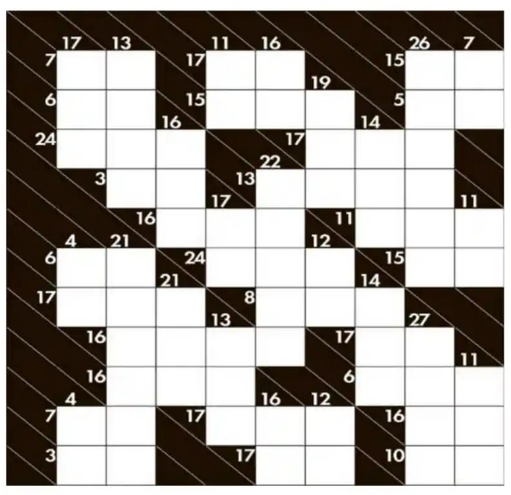
5	5	1	4	6	1	3	5
8	1	6	5	5	4	2	3
7	4	4	2	1	3	8	4
4	2	3	5	7	5	5	6
4	6	1	1	4	5	8	2
2	5	4	5	3	1	7	5
1	7	5	8	2	1	4	7
4	3	7	1	5	2	1	5

SOLUTION TO 3240

3	4	1	5	■	8	6	■
■	3	6	■	4	■	8	5
2	5	■	3	8	6	■	1
1	■	4	8	5	■	3	2
7	2	8	■	6	3	4	■
5	6	7	1	■	4	2	3
6	■	5	■	3	1	■	8
■	1	3	2	■	5	7	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

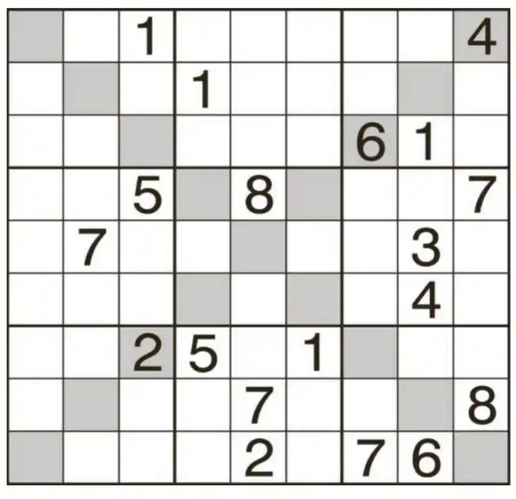
KAKURO- 3241



SOLUTION TO 3240

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3777



SOLUTION TO 3776

3	2	9	4	7	6	1	8	5
1	8	4	3	5	9	7	2	6
7	5	6	8	2	1	3	4	9
6	7	2	5	4	8	9	1	3
4	9	5	2	1	3	8	6	7
8	3	1	6	9	7	2	5	4
5	1	7	9	6	2	4	3	8
2	4	8	7	3	5	6	9	1
9	6	3	1	8	4	5	7	2

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

US trying to 'thwart' improved India ties, says China

Says Beijing handles ties with New Delhi from strategic height, long-term lens

BEIJING, PTI

China on Thursday denounced a Pentagon report, which accused Beijing of leveraging reduced border tensions with India to undermine US-India ties while deepening defence ties with Pakistan as an attempt to sow discord with false narratives.

"The Pentagon's report distorts China's defence policy, sows discord between China and other countries, and aims at finding a pretext for the US to maintain its military supremacy," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here when asked about the US Department of War report submitted to the American Congress. China firmly opposes the report, Lin said.

Xi Jinping and Donald Trump. AFP FILE

Separately, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang denounced the Pentagon report, which also highlighted the cooperation between China and Pakistan in sectors such as defence and space, with plans to set up a military base.

The US report maliciously misinterpreted China's national defence policy, made unfounded speculations about China's military development, slandering and smearing the normal actions of the Chinese military, he said.

The report is full of erroneous understandings of China and geopolitical biases, exaggerating the so-called "Chinese military threat" to mislead the international community, Zhang said.

In his response to the Pentagon report on India-China ties, Lin stated that Beijing views and handles its relations with New Delhi from a strategic height and a long-term perspective.

Another Hindu man lynched in Bangladesh

Police link it to extortion bid, other criminal activities

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, PTI

A Hindu man was lynched in Bangladesh over an extortion allegation, media reports said on Thursday, days after another man from the minority religion was lynched in the country.

The incident took place on Wednesday in Rajbari town's Pangsha upazila, The Daily Star newspaper quoted police as saying.

The deceased, identified as Amrit Mondal, had allegedly formed a criminal gang and was involved in extortion and other criminal activities.

On the day of the incident, Mondal was beaten up by locals when he, along with his group members, tried to extort money from a resident's house, the report said.

Upon receiving information about the incident, police rushed to the spot and rescued Mondal in a critical condition.

He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead around 2:00 am, Assistant Superintendent of Police (Pangsha Circle) Debrata Sarkar said, according to the report.

Mondal's body was sent to Rajbari Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, Sarkar said. Most of his associated fled after the incident, but police arrested one man and recovered firearms from his possession.

According to the police, Mondal had at least two cases filed against him, including a murder case.

The incident comes a week after another Hindu man, Dipu Das, was lynched and his body set on fire over blasphemy allegations in Mymensingh. Police and other law enforcement agencies have made 12 arrests in the case so far. Das' killing sparked widespread protests by factory workers, students and rights groups in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh, and India expressed its concerns as well.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' interim government has said it would take care of Das' minor child, as well as his wife and parents.

The Hindu population in Bangladesh has been affected by a series of incidents against minority communities in the country after the ouster of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August last year.

Home Affairs aide quits after Hadi killing plot allegations

Hours after Sharif Osman Hadi's brother alleged that a section within the interim government had plotted the killing to derail the upcoming general election, Md Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser in the Ministry of Home Affairs, resigned from his post. The Cabinet Division said in a notification issued late Wednesday night that the President had accepted Chowdhury's resignation. Chowdhury is a former police chief.

"Md Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, special assistant (Ministry of Home Affairs) to chief adviser, has resigned from his post. The president has accepted his resignation," an official statement said.

Yunus govt perpetrating 'unspeakable atrocities' against non-Muslims: Hasina

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, PTI: Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday lashed out at the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, accusing it of perpetrating "unspeakable atrocities" against non-Muslims.

The 78-year-old Awami League leader also said that the current ruling group, which has seized power illegally, is setting "horrific precedents such as burning religious minorities to death", in an apparent reference to the lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh last week.

In her message on the occasion of Christmas, Hasina accused the Yunus government of interfering with the freedom of people of all religions and communities to practice their own faiths.

"In particular, it is perpetrating unspeakable atrocities against non-Muslims. It has even set horrific precedents such as burning religious minorities to death. I firmly believe that the people of Bangladesh will not allow this dark time to continue any longer," she said.

Sheikh Hasina. PTI FILE

The Hindu population in Bangladesh has been affected by a series of incidents against minority communities in the country after the ouster of Hasina government in August last year. Last week, a 25-year-old Hindu worker was lynched by a mob in Mymensingh city.

On Monday, minority groups in Bangladesh held a protest in Dhaka over the interim government's failure to prevent the persecution of minorities.

Hasina hoped that Christmas would further strengthen the existing bonds of harmony and goodwill between Christians and followers of other religions in Bangladesh.

"On this festive occasion of Christmas, I wish all Christian brothers and sisters happiness, peace, and prosperity," she said. "May darkness give way to dawn. May Bangladesh live forever," she added.

Thailand defends demolition of Hindu deity statue

BANGKOK, AFP

Thailand on Thursday defended its military's demolition of a Hindu statue along the border with Cambodia, saying the removal was carried out to assert control in a disputed frontier area.

A Cambodian official responded angrily to the destruction of the statue of the Hindu deity Vishnu, after more than two weeks of military clashes between the neighbours.

The Preah Vihear provincial spokesman said it was built in 2014 on Cambodian territory and knocked down on Monday.

Hindu-majority India's foreign ministry said Wednesday that "such disrespectful acts hurt the sentiments of followers around the world, and should not take place".

But the Thai government said on Thursday that the statue's removal was "related to security considerations and area administration and not intended to disrespect any religion or beliefs".

"The said structure was not connected to any religion, but was merely a decorative piece at a location along the Thailand-Cambodia border," it added.

In a separate statement, Bangkok said that the statue was "not installed as a registered or officially recognized religious site".

"More importantly, its removal was undertaken with the objective of affirming effective control of the area," according to the Thai government.

It expressed "sincere regret for any discomfort that may have arisen from misunderstandings" due to the circulating images.

Videos showing the demolition of the Vishnu statue using a backhoe circulated widely on Thai social media pages this week.

GREAT FALL

People dressed as Santa Claus get ready to jump into the Mediterranean Sea during the Copa Nadal (Christmas Cup) swimming race in Barcelona, Spain, on Thursday. REUTERS

Pope Leo decries conditions for Palestinians in Gaza

VATICAN CITY, REUTERS: Pope Leo decried conditions for Palestinians in Gaza in his Christmas sermon on Thursday, in an unusually direct appeal during what is normally a solemn, spiritual service on the day Christians across the globe celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Leo, the first U.S. pope, said the story of Jesus being born in a stable showed that God had "pitched his fragile tent" among the people of the world.

"How, then, can we not think of the tents in Gaza, exposed for weeks to rain, wind and cold?" he asked.

Leo, celebrating his first Christmas after being elected in May by the world's cardinals to succeed the late Pope Francis, has a quieter, more diplomatic style than his predecessor and usually refrains from making political references in his sermons.

In a later Christmas blessing, the pope, who has made care for immigrants a key theme of his early papacy, also lamented the situation for migrants and refugees who "traverse the American continent".

Leo, who has in the past criticised U.S. President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown, did not mention Trump. In a Christmas Eve sermon on Wednesday, the pope said refusing to help the poor and strangers was tantamount to rejecting God himself.

The new pope has lamented the conditions for Palestinians in Gaza several times recently and told journalists last month that the only solution in the decades-long conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people must include a Palestinian state.

Government of India

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26 December 2025

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India's exports to fall short of $1-tn target, despite FTA push

Services exports likely to inch past $400 billion

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's total exports, merchandise and services put together, is likely to remain at around $850 billion in the current financial year, falling well short of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's target of $1 trillion, despite push for free trade deals with multiple countries.

Goods exports, which stood at $438 billion in 2024-25, are expected to remain broadly flat in the current fiscal due to weak global demand and high US tariffs. However, services exports are likely to inch past $400 billion in 2025-26 from $387 billion recorded in the previous year, as per an analysis by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

In the financial year ended March 2025, India's total exports stood at $825 billion. For the current fiscal, the government has set an exports target of $1 trillion.

GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said in a note that the $1 trillion exports target now "looks more aspirational than realistic in a slowing, protectionist global economy".

The external environment is deteriorating fast. The US, under President Donald Trump, has sidelined World Trade Organisation disciplines in favour of steep unilateral tariffs. India's exports to the US fell by about 21% between May and November 2025, under the current 50% tariff regime, Srivastava said.

Unless Washington rolls back the additional 25% penalty tariff linked to India's Russian oil purchases — or concludes a trade deal — exports to India's largest market risk further erosion, he added.

During the April-November period of the current financial year, India's total export stood at $562.13 billion, which is 5.43% higher than $533.16 billion recorded in the corresponding period of the last year. Merchandise export rose from $284.60 billion in April-November 2024, to $292.07 billion in the first eight months of 2025-26, as per the latest data released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

In the second half of 2025, goods exports were hit due to high US tariffs and weak global demand. The situation is unlikely to improve next year, despite a push for free trade deals with multiple countries.

"India enters 2026 facing a far tougher global trade environment than it has seen in years. Rising protectionism in advanced economies, weakening global demand and new climate-linked trade barriers are colliding, just as India is trying to scale up exports," GTRI said.

While the uncertainties over the US tariffs continue, Indian exporters brace for a new challenge from the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which is scheduled to come into force from January 1, 2026.

Through the CBAM, the 27-nation bloc seeks to impose carbon tax on imports. CBAM compliance and reporting requirements have already pushed India's steel exports to the EU down by about 24%.

In 2025, India moved decisively in trade diplomacy, concluding trade deals with the UK, Oman and New Zealand. This has taken the total number of India's comprehensive FTAs to 18. Talks are underway with the US, the EU, Russia and Mexico. If concluded, India would have trade agreements with virtually every major economy, except China.

"The challenge now is not signing more deals, but making existing ones work," said Srivastava.

"India must urgently review the performance of its FTAs — sector by sector — to ensure that they are actually expanding exports, integrating Indian firms into global value-chains, and delivering measurable trade gains, rather than remaining under-utilised diplomatic trophies," he added.

PIECES OF INDIA'S TRADE PUZZLE

India's total exports in FY2024-25: $825 bn (Merchandise $438 billion, Services $387 billion)

India's total exports in FY2025-26 (GTRI projection): $850 bn (services may cross $400 billion, merchandise to remain flat)

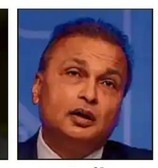
Total exports in April-November 2025: $562.13 bn (merchandise $292.07 billion)

Challenges in 2025:	Challenges in 2026:	Three FTAs in 2025:	FTAs in pipeline:
US tariff, weak global demands	EU carbon tax (CBAM), US tariff, weak global demands	UK, Oman and New Zealand (Total FTAs rise to 18)	USA, EU, Russia, Mexico

'Less than 50% of Indian business families have a documented succession plan'

Advisory firm suggests thoughtful governance, transfer of wealth

Mukesh Ambani


Anil Ambani

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

When it comes to succession planning, Indian business families are reluctant to pass on leadership positions that not only deny fresh perspectives and skill sets, but also hamper growth and innovation. Insights from Entrust Family Office, a multi-family office advising many leading business families in India, revealed that less than 50% of Indian business families have a documented succession plan.

From Reliance Industries, Bharat Forge, and Raymond Group to Murugappa Group and Tata Group, the biggest business empires have faced significant succession planning issues. Entrust Family Office, which has over Rs 18,000 crore in assets and over 80 clients under advisory, has observed that even among families with formal succession plans, clearly defined timelines for leadership transition remain uncommon.

"Leadership changes in India are still largely reactive, often triggered by age-related incapacity or unforeseen events rather than planned, phased handovers," it said.

In the recent Kalyani family dispute, last week, the Bombay High Court allowed siblings Sameer Hiremath and Pallavi Swadi to amend their suit, permitting them to seek a restraint on the voting rights associated with shares they acquired from the family's core assets.

Baba Kalyani, the family patriarch, has one sister Sugandha Hiremath and brother Gaurishankar Kalyani. The son and daughter of Sugandha had filed a suit seeking partition of the Kalyani family assets.

In another family feud, property disputes in the Raymond Group led to court battles. There was a rift between Raymond Group 's Gautam Singhania and his father Vijaypat Singhania over property and control. Not just the lack of succession planning, even poorly drafted planning led to many court battles and disputes.

In 2002, Dhirubhai Ambani left without a will, leading to a separation between his two sons — Mukesh and Anil. The bitter dispute between these two brothers led to the splitting of the Reliance business empire.

"In the absence of structured planning, families face risks such as ownership fragmentation, governance disputes, and erosion of enterprise value, with profitable businesses sometimes diluted or sold due to unresolved internal transitions," Entrust Family Office said.

It also added that Indian business families are undergoing a structural shift, increasingly separating ownership from management. Families are choosing to remain long-term custodians of capital, while professional management teams run day-to-day operations. The next generation, meanwhile, is focused on diversification, transformation, and building new ventures alongside legacy businesses, with nearly 80-90% seeking exposure beyond the core enterprise, it noted.

"Most families recognise the importance of succession planning, and many are now beginning to translate that intent into formal structures," said Entrust Family Office Principal Founder and Managing Director Rajmohan Krishnan.

"The real challenge lies in starting these conversations early and giving families and heirs the right structure. As India's wealth transitions across generations, long-term success will be shaped not just by how wealth is created, but by how thoughtfully it is governed and transferred," he added.

Last year, in its report, PwC mentioned that while nine out of 10 publicly-traded companies in India are family-owned or controlled, only 63% of Indian family business leaders said they have formal governance structures in place, including shareholder agreements, family constitutions and protocols, and even wills.

It called for the need to have proactive and strategic succession planning. "It promotes talent development by preparing future leaders, aids in risk management by mitigating unexpected disruptions, and aligns successors with business goals and vision," it noted.

Nasscom flags risks in new H-1B visa selection policy

BENGALURU, DHNS

Technology industry body Nasscom has said the recent changes to the H-1B work visa selection process, which replaces the lottery system for selecting visa recipients, raises important legal, economic, and operational concerns. It calls for a transparent and trusted visa framework.

"By assigning multiple selection entries based on Occupational and Employment Wage Statistics levels, the framework risks moving beyond the statutory focus on 'specialty occupation' and toward wage ranking, potentially introducing regional and occupational distortions," it said.

Wage levels vary significantly by geography and role, and a weighted model could inadvertently disadvantage small and mid-sized enterprises, start-ups, research institutions, and university-linked employers that operate with moderate but market-appropriate wage structures, Nasscom said in a statement.

While H-1B professionals constitute a small share of the overall US workforce supported by Nasscom member companies, they play a major role in driving innovation, productivity, and job creation across the digital economy.

H-1B petitions at Level I and II wage bands frequently represent entry-level roles for graduates of US universities in science, engineering, and computing disciplines. These positions form a vital part of the STEM talent pipeline, enabling early-career professionals to gain industry experience and progress into mid- and senior-level innovation roles over time. "Under a wage-weighted system, restricting opportunities at the entry level could weaken the future talent base and discourage international students from pursuing advanced education in the US. This would work against the country's goals of strengthening competitiveness, driving innovation, and supporting higher education," it said, adding that a sudden shift to a wage-weighted model would introduce uncertainty, increase compliance complexity, and disrupt long-established workforce planning, particularly for smaller and mid-sized firms that align recruitment with academic calendars, client delivery schedules, and product release cycles.

Nasscom member companies collectively support more than 1.6 million skilled jobs across the US, contributing $198 billion to the US GDP. With over 264,500 employees directly in the US and a presence in more than 25 major American communities, Nasscom companies help strengthen both established and emerging technology hubs.

It said any structural reform must preserve predictability, equity, and alignment with statutory intent. Should a wage-weighted approach be pursued, a phased implementation with sufficient lead time would be essential. Delaying implementation until the FY2028 lottery cycle would provide employers the necessary runway to adapt processes, ensure compliance, and maintain confidence in the stability of the US talent and investment environment, it added.

India engaged with US to find mutually beneficial pact: Envoy

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, PTI: India remains very constantly engaged with the US to find a mutually beneficial and balanced trade arrangement as early as possible, India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Mohan Kwatra said.

"On trade and tariff... we remain very constantly engaged with the United States Trade Representative (USTR) with the hope to find a mutually beneficial and a balanced trade arrangement as early as possible," Kwatra told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"Our effort all along, right through this whole year, the tone for the relationship was set during the PM's visit in early February. We agreed to a very, very significant and substantial outcome document across a range of areas. Space was one of them," he said.

Kwatra termed India's successful launch of an American communication satellite on Wednesday as a "very important and big day" for partnership between Washington and New Delhi, saying it caps a series of achievements in 2025 in bilateral space cooperation between the countries.

In a historic achievement, ISRO's heaviest rocket LVM3-M6 successfully placed the next-generation commercial communication satellite BlueBird-6 (Block-2), developed by AST SpaceMobile, USA, into its precise intended orbit. LVM3 carried the heaviest commercial satellite ever launched from Indian soil, underscoring LVM3's growing capability as a reliable heavy-lift launch vehicle.

Vinay Mohan Kwatra

PM Narendra Modi had visited the US in February this year for a bilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump, their first meeting within weeks of Trump's inauguration for a second term in the White House.

In the joint statement, the two leaders had hailed 2025 as a "pioneering year" for US-India civil space cooperation. They had called for more collaboration in space exploration, including on long-duration human spaceflight missions, spaceflight safety and sharing of expertise and professional exchanges in emerging areas, including planetary protection.

IndiGo cancels 67 flights due to bad weather, op issues

MUMBAI, PTI: India's largest airline IndiGo on Thursday cancelled 67 flights from multiple airports due to "forecasted" bad weather and operational reasons, according to its website.

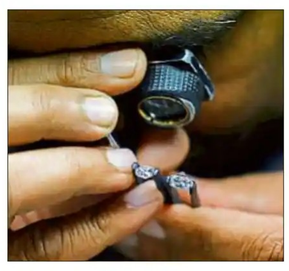
Of the 67 cancelled flights, only four were for operational reasons, and the rest were due to "forecasted" bad weather at various airports, including Agartala, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Varanasi, and Bengaluru, among others.

Aviation regulator DGCA has announced that the period between December 10 and February 10 next year as the official fog window this winter. As part of the DGCA fog operations (CAT-IIIB) norms, airlines have to mandatorily roster pilots who are trained to operate in low-visibility conditions, as well as deploy a CAT-IIIB-compliant aircraft fleet for such operations.

IndiGo, whose operations are under DGCA monitoring after the cancellations of thousands of flights early this month, is already operating a curtailed schedule in compliance with the government's order.

India to assume chair of Kimberley Process from Jan 1

MUMBAI, DHNS: India has been elected the Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) for 2026 — which aims at preventing the trade of "conflict diamonds" internationally.



The Union Government and the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), the nodal agency for the Kimberley Process (KP) in India, have welcomed the development.

The Kimberley Process Plenary has selected India to assume the chairpersonship of the Kimberley Process from January 1, 2026.

The KP is a tripartite initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry and civil society, aimed at preventing trade in "conflict diamonds" — rough diamonds used by rebel groups or their allies to finance conflicts that undermine legitimate governments, as defined in UN Security Council resolutions.

India takes over as KP Vice-Chair from December 25, before assuming the chairpersonship in the New Year. This will be the third time that India has been entrusted with the KP chair.

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said India's selection reflects global trust in the PM Narendra Modi government's commitment to promoting integrity and transparency in international trade. "India's KP leadership reinforces its credibility among diamond-producing nations, trading centres, industry and civil society, placing us at the centre of efforts to strengthen transparency, continuity and unity in diamond governance," he added.

During the KP leadership, India's priorities will include: building consumer confidence in conflict-free diamonds, accelerating digital certification & traceability and strengthening transparency & accountability across the supply-chain.

"India's selection reflects the international community's trust in the government's principled and inclusive approach of strengthening global diamond trade through efficient governance of the KP," said GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali.

Adani seals Rs 80k cr in deals since 2023 short-seller crisis

NEW DELHI, PTI: Adani Group has completed as many as 33 acquisitions worth about Rs 80,000 crore across its businesses since January 2023, signalling sustained access to capital and steady execution following the short-seller allegations that jolted markets nearly three years ago.

The buying spree has been concentrated in the conglomerate's core sectors, according to market data and company sources.

Ports led with acquisitions of around Rs 28,145 crore, followed by cement at Rs 24,710 crore and power at Rs 12,251 crore. Newer, incubating businesses accounted for Rs 3,927 crore, while transmission and distribution added Rs 2,544 crore of deals, they said.

The acquisitions come as Adani works to rebuild investor confidence after now shuttered US-based short seller Hindenburg Research accused the group of accounting irregularities and stock manipulation in early 2023 — allegations the conglomerate has consistently denied.

Adani's comeback strategy has centred on a deliberate mix of balance-sheet repair and selective expansion aimed at restoring credibility. The group prioritised deleveraging, equity infusions and tighter capital allocation, while continuing acquisitions in core businesses such as ports, cement and power to protect cash flows and scale advantages.

In recent quarters, Adani has touted its resilient balance sheet, with net debt-to-EBITDA at about 3x, below its stated guidance range of 3.5x to 4.5x, even as it continued to invest and expand across sectors.

The biggest of the 33 deals closed in the last three years was the Rs 21,700 crore buyout of Australia's North Queensland Export Terminal by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Ltd in April this year, market data showed.

The busiest, however, was the cement space with back-to-back acquisitions. The other deals have been in the data centre business, electricity transmission, roads and real estate.

Ola Electric secures Rs 366.78 crore PLI-Auto incentive

NEW DELHI, PTI: Homegrown e-mobility major Ola Electric on Thursday said it has received a sanction order from the Ministry of Heavy Industries for the release of incentives amounting to Rs 366.78 crore under the production-linked incentive scheme.

The sanction pertains to the demand incentive for the determined sales value for FY2024-25, and authorises a payment of Rs 366.78 crore to be released through IFCI Limited, the designated financial institution for disbursement under the scheme, the Bengaluru-based firm said in a statement.

Key contributor

The incentive has been sanctioned in accordance with the applicable terms and conditions of the PLI-Auto Scheme, as amended from time to time, it added.

This milestone reinforces Ola Electric's role as a key contributor to India's advanced automotive manufacturing ecosystem and reflects the company's strong execution across scale, localisation, and technology-led vertically integrated manufacturing, it stated.

RISING INPUT COSTS

Gear up to pay more for your favourite ride from Jan

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Forex pressures and other macroeconomic compulsions, especially rising raw material costs, have prompted automakers across segments to increase vehicle prices between 2% and 6% from January 2026.

Luxury carmakers have announced price increases of at least 2% across their portfolios, starting from the first month of the next calendar year.

German auto giant Mercedes-Benz has announced a pricing adjustment across its entire model range, effective January 1. The price correction, capped at 2% on ex-showroom prices, comes amid sustained forex pressures that have characterised the luxury automotive landscape through 2025.

"Currency headwinds have persisted longer than we anticipated this year, with the Euro consistently trading over the Rs 100-mark. This prolonged volatility affects every aspect of our operations, from imported components for local production, to completely built units. In addition, rising input costs, increasing logistical expenses, in combination with inflationary costs have significantly raised our overall operational costs," Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said.

Likewise, compatriot BMW India is mulling a 3% increase in car prices across its product line in January, though it has not yet finalised a specific date for the hike to take effect. The company's high-end two-wheeler arm, BMW Motorrad India, has already announced a price increase of up to 6% across its range, effective January 1.

"Pressure from forex due to the Indian rupee's sharp depreciation against US dollar and Euro has not eased for several months now and the input costs of raw materials and logistics have been impacted. The planned price hike measure will ensure necessary profitability and continued value generation for the company, as well as our dealer partners," BMW Group India President and CEO Hardeep Singh Brar said.

Rising input costs and forex pressures typically hurt sales by pushing up vehicle prices and reducing affordability. Higher costs of raw materials, including steel, electronics, energy, and logistics, increase manufacturing expenses, while a weaker local currency makes imported parts and fully-built vehicles more expensive. This often forces automakers to raise prices or trim features to protect margins. Such price hikes, frequently compounded by higher interest rates, reduce purchasing power, leading to deferred buying decisions. At the same time, manufacturers are compelled to prioritise higher-margin models or rationalise production, resulting in slower sales growth or volume declines.

Meanwhile, JSW MG Motor India has also announced that it will hike vehicle prices by up to 2% from January 1. The automaker said the extent of the increase would vary by model and variant.

Among electric vehicle manufacturers, leading two-wheeler player Ather Energy has announced a price hike of up to Rs 3,000 across its scooter line-up, effective January 1.

Vehicle prices across categories were reduced after the government announced cut in GST rates from September 22 onwards.

Tanvi Patri

Parul, Tanvi upset fancied opponents

VIJAYAWADA, PTI: Experienced shuttler Shruti Mundada and rising stars Parul Choudhary and Tanvi Patri beat higher-ranked rivals to reach the women's singles pre-quarterfinals in the Senior National Badminton Championships here Thursday.

Shruti packed off seventh-seeded Jiya Rawat 21-14, 21-9, while Parul got the better of ninth seed 18-21, 21-18, 21-12 to advance.

Tanvi Patri ended the campaign of eighth seed Isharani Baruah 22-20, 21-19.

Also advancing to the next round was top seed Unnati Hooda, second seed Anupama Upadhyaya, third seed Anmol Kharb and world junior silver medallist Tanvi Sharma.

In men's singles, Aryaman Tandon upset third seed M Raghu 17-21, 21-11, 21-14 in the round of 32.

Abhinav Garg and Rithvik Sanjeevi S also secured their spots in the pre-quarterfinals.

Garg got the better of 10th seed Abhinav Thakur 21-19, 21-16, while Rithvik defeated 13th seed Orijit Chaliha 21-15, 21-19.

In mixed doubles, Nitin Kumar and Kanika Kanwal upset sixth seeds Kevin Wong CC and Pranavi N 23-21, 21-15.

Clubs don't have voting rights in EFI: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Delhi High Court has ruled that clubs affiliated with the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) do not have voting rights in the federation's governance, reinforcing the primacy of state associations and dealing a setback to club-based voting structures that had operated under ministerial exemptions.

Dismissing a set of appeals filed by a Chandigarh-based riding club and connected parties, a division bench of Justices Anil Kshetarpal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar upheld that the participation of clubs and institutional members in EFI elections was contrary to the Sports Code, which prescribes a pyramidal governance structure for national sports federations.

The court, in its order on December 23, noted that Clauses 3.9 and 3.10 of the Sports Code explicitly reserve voting rights in a national federation's electoral college for affiliated State Associations (SAs) and Union Territory Associations (UTAs), and not for clubs or individual members.

"In the scheme of the Sports Code, a club does not possess any statutory or legal entitlement to participate in or influence the governance of a National Sports Federation," the bench observed, adding that allowing clubs to vote would dilute the representative structure envisaged under the Code.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

4th Test: Australia vs England (Day 1, 5:00 am). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network**, **JioHotstar**.

3rd Women's T20I: India vs Sri Lanka (7:00 pm). **LIVE** on **Star Sports 1**, **JioHotstar.**

VHT: Jharkhand vs Rajasthan, Assam vs J&K (9 am). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Khel, JioHotstar**.

FOOTBALL

EPL: Manchester United vs Newcastle United (1:30 am, Saturday). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 1**, **JioHotstar**.

AFCON: Angola vs Zimbabwe (6 pm), Egypt vs South Africa (8:30 pm), Zambia vs Comoros (11 pm). **LIVE** on **FanCode**.

CRICKET WOMEN'S T20I SERIES

Indians smell series triumph

Leading the series 2-0, hosts look to seal the deal with a win in the third game

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PTI

A dominant India will look to seal the five-match series with another ruthless display when they take on a low-on-confidence Sri Lanka in the third women's T20 International here on Friday.

India have been outstanding with both the bat and the ball in the first and second T20Is, registering comprehensive eight-wicket and seven-wicket wins respectively in Visakhapatnam to underline their overall dominance over Sri Lanka.

It was India's ninth win in their last 11 T20Is against the island nation, who last tasted victory against the hosts in July 2024 at Dambulla.

India boast of an enviable batting line-up, with different players stepping up in the two games. While newly-appointed Delhi Capitals captain Jemimah Rodrigues starred in the opening T20I, opener Shafali Verma finished the job in the second.

The bowling unit has been equally sharp, with the spinners calling the shots by restricting Sri Lanka to 121 for 6 and 128 for 9 in the two matches. Youngsters N Shree Charani, Vaishnavi Sharma and Kranti Gaud have shared the workload effectively, bowling with discipline and control.

Harmanpreet Kaur-led India lead the five-match T20I series 2-0 as the teams travelled to Thiruvananthapuram from Visakhapatnam for the remaining three games. PTI

India's bowling depth was on display when experienced all-rounder Deepti Sharma missed the second T20I with a mild fever and Sneh Rana stepped up with a frugal 1 for 11 in four overs.

Fielding was the lone area of concern in the opening game, where India dropped five catches, but they showed marked improvement in the second match with three sharp run-outs.

Led by Harmanpreet Kaur, India will aim to continue raising their standards as the series moves to Thiruvananthapuram, which will host the next three matches.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, will hope that the change of venue brings a change in their fortune for a side battered by back-to-back heavy defeats. While the gulf in quality has been evident, Sri Lanka will be particularly disappointed by the manner of their batting collapses.

Asked to bat first in both matches, Sri Lanka failed to post competitive totals. They showed some promise early on but lost momentum as wickets tumbled in clusters during the latter half of their innings.

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS, 7.00 PM

In the opening game, Vishmi Gunaratne laboured to 39 off 43 balls, while Hasini Perera and Harshitha Samarawickrama also struck under a run-a-ball, denying the innings any late acceleration.

The second T20I followed a similar script. Sri Lanka appeared on track before losing captain Chamari Athapaththu, after which they collapsed spectacularly, losing six wickets for 26 runs, including three run-outs, to finish with another sub-par total.

Their bowling too has lacked the penetration required to trouble India's deep batting line-up.

"We had a good powerplay but lost a couple of wickets, then struggled in the middle overs," Athapaththu said after the second T20I.

"Batters played too much with the horizontal bat, which is an area for improvement. We need to score more than 150 batting first. We are trying to rotate strike, but we need to hit more boundaries."

Aus go for all-pace attack in 4th Test

MELBOURNE, AFP

Australia will take an all-pace attack into the fourth Ashes Test, skipper Steve Smith said Thursday, while Josh Inglis was dropped with selectors preferring Usman Khawaja.

The hosts head into the Boxing Day Test with an unassailable 3-0 lead over England, but are without pace spearhead Pat Cummins and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon.

Cummins is being managed after his return in the third Adelaide Test after a lengthy lay off with a lower back injury and will play no further part in the Ashes.

Lyon had surgery this week for a torn hamstring and faces a long recovery.

Todd Murphy was called up as cover for Lyon, but Smith said they had opted for a pace attack given the "quite furry" surface at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"We're going to be playing four quicks and no spinner. (The pitch) has 10 millimetres of grass, quite furry, quite green," he said. "I dare say it's going to offer quite a bit, particularly if (day one) is similar conditions to today, quite cold and overcast so I dare say there's going to be quite a bit of movement."

Australia named a 12-man squad with a final decision on who leads the attack alongside Mitchell Starc and Scott Boland being made at the toss.

One of Michael Neser, Jhye Richardson, or Brendan Doggett will miss out.

Doggett and Neser played in the second Test in Brisbane, but made way in Adelaide when Cummins and Lyon returned.

Richardson is in his first squad for four years after three shoulder surgeries.

Smith missed the third Test with vertigo symptoms and will slot back in at number four.

Australia XII: Travis Head, Jake Weatherald, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith (capt), Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland, Brendan Doggett, Michael Neser, Jhye Richardson.

Australia's Scott Boland bowls in the nets ahead of the fourth Ashes Test in Melbourne on Thursday. AFP

Villa face Chelsea as race tightens

LONDON, AFP

Aston Villa face a tough challenge at Chelsea on Saturday after muscling their way into the Premier League title race alongside Arsenal and Manchester City.

The Gunners, top of the tree at Christmas, host Brighton, while Pep Guardiola's in-form City travel to Nottingham Forest.

Liverpool manager Arne Slot is grappling with a striker crisis after Alexander Isak fractured his leg, while Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes also faces a spell on the sidelines.

Unai Emery's third-placed Villa are still considered rank outsiders for the Premier League title even though they are just three points behind leaders Arsenal.

Villa's 2-1 home win against Manchester United was their 10th consecutive victory in all competitions -- the first time they have achieved the feat as a top-flight team since 1914.

One of the major reasons for their recent success is the form of England midfielder Morgan Rogers, who failed to register a single goal involvement in his first seven matches in all competitions.

Aston Villa's goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez during a training session at the club's training ground on Christmas eve. X

Now it is a different story: he has recorded 11 goal involvements in his past 15 appearances and the quality of his goals has been striking.

Rogers' seven Premier League goals this season have come from just 2.86 expected goals -- a metric used to determine how likely a player is to convert a chance.

But football analysts Opta give Villa just a five percent chance of becoming English champions for the first time since 1981.

Emery's men have an opportunity to silence the doubters when they take on fourth-placed Chelsea, with a match at Arsenal to follow just days later.

Slot's headache

In the early weeks of the season, Arne Slot would probably have envisaged Mohamed Salah and Alexander Isak as two of his first-choice attackers.

Now the Liverpool boss has neither -- Salah is with Egypt at the Africa Cup of Nations, while Isak faces at least two months on the sidelines after fracturing his leg against Tottenham.

Slot has steadied the ship at Anfield after a shocking run of six defeats in seven Premier League matches that left Liverpool's title defence in tatters.

A run of three wins and two draws in five league games has lifted the reigning champions into fifth spot, but there will be concerns over where the goals are going to come from ahead of the visit of bottom club Wolves.

Body blow for United

Bruno Fernandes has been a shining light and virtually ever-present during Manchester United's recent lean years.

But manager Ruben Amorim is going to have to plan for a period without his talisman after the Portugal midfielder pulled up with an apparent hamstring injury in United's 2-1 defeat at Villa Park.

While the prognosis is unclear, Amorim has already ruled Fernandes out of United's clash against Newcastle at Old Trafford on Friday, among a list of absentees.

Schedule: Manchester United vs Newcastle (1:30 am IST, Saturday), Nottingham Forest v Manchester City (6:00 pm), Arsenal vs Brighton, Brentford vs Bournemouth, Burnley v Everton, Liverpool v Wolverhampton, West Ham v Fulham, Chelsea v Aston Villa (8:30 pm).

Don't have lots of expectations; I'm here just to play: Gukesh

DOHA, PTI: World champion D Gukesh **(in pic)** says that classical chess will continue to be his bread and butter, and that he doesn't have "a lot of expectations" from the season-ending star-studded FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championships, beginning here on Friday.

Gukesh is coming into the end-of-season million-euro prize-money tournament following an underwhelming season, which also included an early exit from the FIDE World Cup in Goa recently, and the champion said he was here to experiment, have some fun and enjoy the tournament.

"I think, for me, playing well in any format is quite important and I have been taking rapid and blitz a bit more seriously this year. That being said, I think rapid and blitz events have been slightly (of a) less priority than classical events for me," said Gukesh, 19, during the pre-tournament media interaction, where five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen was also in attendance.

"So, this is an event which I don't have a lot of expectations. I'm here just to play, you know, just experiment, enjoy and play chess with aim of having fun," added Gukesh, who is part of a sizeable Indian contingent here.

Besides Gukesh, India's R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, P Harikrishna, Vidit Gujrathi and a whole brigade of young players, both in Open and Women's section, is in attendance but Carlsen and Iranian-French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja are expected to dominate the field in the Open category.

'Gukesh is a youngster'

Chess superstar Carlsen didn't hide behind the veneer of niceties and asserted that he was here to win the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship, and that fatherhood or the emergence of youngsters hadn't diminished his hunger for success.

With Gukesh emerging as a potential future rival for the Norwegian when asked if he still considers the India a youngster, replied in the affirmative.

Jeev triumphs as Pukhraj claims IGPL Order of Merit

COLOMBO, PTI: India's golf legend Jeev Milkha Singh ended a 13-year title drought after securing the IGPL Invitational Sri Lanka with a perfect finish to the inaugural season of the IGPL here on Thursday.

The 54-year-old, who has not won a pro event since 2012, gave his young rivals a perfect lesson, producing a closing six-under 65 to total 15-under to outwit Aryan Roopa Anand (68) by one shot.

"I had never played in Sri Lanka before. It is an emotional moment for me. Because this is where my parents fell in love and began their relationship," said an emotional Jeev, wiping his tears away.

"My mother played volleyball and my father was here for athletics. So, this is where their journey together began.

"We lost them in 2021 and I lost my will to play but a little later in 2022 I decided I would play for them and win. I hope today's win will put a smile on their faces."

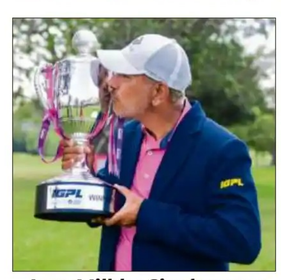
Four players including Aman Raj (71), who was in the running for the IGPL Order of Merit, was tied eighth with Raghav Chugh (63), Pranavi Urs (66), and Kapil Kumar (68) at 8-under.

Pranavi, winner of the IGPL Mumbai, was the top woman finisher at Tied-8th at 8-under. The Mysuru girl, with Rs 34,84,687, was also the top woman pro earner of the season.

Veer Ganapathy, who was one of the big finds of the inaugural IGPL season, was seventh at nine-under. He shot under par on all three days.

As Jeev won his maiden IGPL title, Pukhraj Singh Gill, despite finishing T-12th, won the IGPL Order of Merit by a razor thin margin over Aman Raj and Gaganjeet Bhullar.

After 11 events carrying Rs 1.5 crore prize purse with Rs 22.50 lakh for the winner, Pukhraj was less than Rs 9,000 ahead of Aman Raj.



Jeev Milkha Singh poses with the trophy.

Serving doping ban to wearing Olympic medal: Jarman's redemption

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

On January 5 next year, Jarmanpreet Singh will storm into the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium in Chennai as the captain of the SG Pipers for their opening game of the Hockey India League.

For the Indian defensive mainstay, with 142 senior international caps to his name, it is sure to be a life-comes-full-circle moment as only fading scars of a decade-long wound remain.

"I'm not ashamed of talking about it. Ask me anything and I will answer," Jarman tells *DH* as he addresses the elephant in the room.

The backstory: Touted as a future star, an 18-year-old Jarman was picked up by the Punjab Warriors for the 2015 edition of the Hockey India League (HIL) and was a guaranteed member of the Indian squad for the 2016 Junior World Cup (which they won). Fate, however, had other plans as the Punjab player's dope test returned positive in February 2015 resulting in a two-year suspension that kept him away from the big events he was meant to be a part of.

"I did not do anything intentionally. It was a mistake due to lack of awareness. That was the darkest phase of my life," begins the now 29-year-old.

"One day I was told I will be banned as my dope tests were positive. I was in shock, my legs were shaking, I felt that my career was over, my life was over because I cannot play anymore. Then the heads at Hockey India made me sit, calmed me down and asked me to think if I had taken any medicine in the last two weeks.

"I called my father, he reminded me a doctor back home had given me a pain killer for a back issue. I told my team doctor who asked me for the prescription. That's how we found out that the medicine injected had banned substances. We weren't aware, the doctor who gave it didn't know and I was caught in a loop."

What transpired was a year-long court case in Delhi where the father and son duo went on to fight against the ban but failed to reverse the inevitable. One year done and with another 365 long days to go, it felt like a life sentence for Jarman and his family.

India's defensive mainstay Jarmanpreet Singh is all set to lead SG Pipers at the upcoming Hockey India League scheduled to begin on Jan 3 next year in Chennai. AFP FILE PHOTO

"'*Aapke bete ne drugs liya hai?*' (your son has taken drugs?) were the pointed questions posed to my parents. They hardly spoke back and endured it without telling me. I was asked to get out of the stadium. I wasn't allowed anywhere near kids. I was asked to stay inside my room, eat at the mess when nobody is around.

"But my younger brother (Sandeep) didn't let me give up. Twice a day, me and him practiced on the turf when it was empty. Sometimes I would practice and fall, I cried, I constantly asked him if I could get back to the Indian team, he never lost faith. See, that's why I have a tattoo of his name here (above the inked Olympic rings on his right forearm). To avoid societal scrutiny and not worrying about the financial burden, my parents sent me to New Zealand and Australia for a few months where I regained my confidence," recollects Jarman.

Returning to make his senior India debut in 2018, the willowy defender has since been a part of Indian teams that have won gold at the 2022 Asian Games, gold in the 2023 and 2024 Asian Champions Trophy, silver at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, 2025 Asia Cup and the bronze at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The life lessons learnt on and off the pitch have taught Jarman the importance of being a giver. And the lone sporting hero from his village Rajdhan in Amritsar, has joined hands with the local government authorities to set-up a sporting facility that will have a hockey pitch, football ground, volleyball court and a small athletic track.

The land demarcated for the same already has a fully-equipped indoor gym for everyone in the hamlet, without any sporting history or culture, to make use of.

One cannot help but wonder if this is an act of redemption? No, it certainly is not! Because for Jarman, giving without expecting anything in return comes naturally as he understands the repercussions of losing all too well.

"I want to share my story because I don't want any youngster to go through such an experience. I'm lucky to have a supportive family and Hockey India who protected me as I was so young. My team-mates never remind me of my past and Craig (Fulton, head coach of current Indian men's side) has been a friend more than a coach as he understands a person first to make him a better player," says the Arjuna Awardee.

Jarmanpreet's story is about having it all and losing everything only to earn it all back and more. It is about transforming jeer into cheer - a rebirth of a 'dope offender' once shunned away who will soon lead to be called 'Aye, aye Captain!'.

Karnataka tennis players bag doubles titles

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's Avyaan Bhatsoori/ Ved Mehta and Aaradhya Shetty/ Viana Ranjan won the boys' and girls' doubles titles respectively at the MAT-AITA Under-12 Championship series tennis tournament here.

Ved and Avyaan defeated state-mates Darsh Malhan, Aahan Shawa in straight sets 6-4, 6-4 while Aaradhya and Viana also won their final comfortably against Lohitha Maremalla and Raksha Rohith 6-2, 6-2.

Avyaan is also in fray for the boys' singles title as he will face Darsh in the final.

Results: Boys: Singles: Semifinals: Avyaan Bhatsoori (Kar) bt Keerthidhar Maddipatla (Kar) 6-3, 6-3; Darsh Malhan (Kar) bt Hojashwin Kumar (Kar) 6-2, 6-3. **Doubles: Final:** Ved Mehta/Avyaan Bhatsoori (Kar) bt Darsh Malhan/Aahan Shaw (Kar) 6-4, 6-4. **Girls: Singles: Semifinals:** Lavanya Singh (UP) bt Viana Ranjan (Kar) 6-3, 6-4; Rachel Rayudu (Kar) bt Raksha Rohith (Kar) 6-1, 6-2. **Doubles: Final:** Aaradhya Darshan Shetty/Viana Ranjan (Kar) bt Lohitha Maremalla/Raksha Rohith (Kar) 6-2, 6-2.

Pratitee finishes third at Junior chess nationals

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru's Pratitee Bordoloi delivered a stellar performance at the recently-concluded National Junior Girls Chess Championships in Jamshedpur.

Competing in the U-19 category at just 12, Pratitee scored 8.5 out of 11 to clinch the second runner-up title. Although her prospects seemed dim after losing her fourth and fifth-round matches and drawing in the sixth, she staged a remarkable comeback by winning her remaining five games.

By scoring a perfect 5/5 in the final leg, she emerged as a surprise winner. With this outcome, she will also represent India in the Asian and World Youth championships.

Notably, Pratitee also recently secured the runner-up title at the Sub-Junior Championship in Ghaziabad.

Pratitee Bardoloi poses with her spoils after finishing as the second runner-up at the National Junior Girls Chess C'ships in Jamshedpur.

CRICKET VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Virat in focus again

Veteran returned to domestic List A cricket with a century

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

The spotlight, as always, will be on Virat Kohli when a high-spirited Delhi take on Gujarat in their second Vijay Hazare Elite Group D fixture at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence Ground 1 here on Friday.

The calculated strokeplay that defined Kohli's dominance over the last 15 years remains undiminished as the goods in his recent outings attest. The match against Andhra on Wednesday was another illustration of the form the right-hander is in at the moment. The 37-year-old scored a brilliant 131 (101b) as Delhi chased down a competitive 299 with great ease.

In the last five innings, Kohli has smashed two international hundreds, a List A ton and an unbeaten fifty each against Australia and South Africa, and it does fuel the notion that these performances are directed to those who question his place in the ODI set-up.

After the South Africa ODIs and before arriving in Bengaluru where there was an 18-day gap, Kohli was training with former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar in Mumbai.

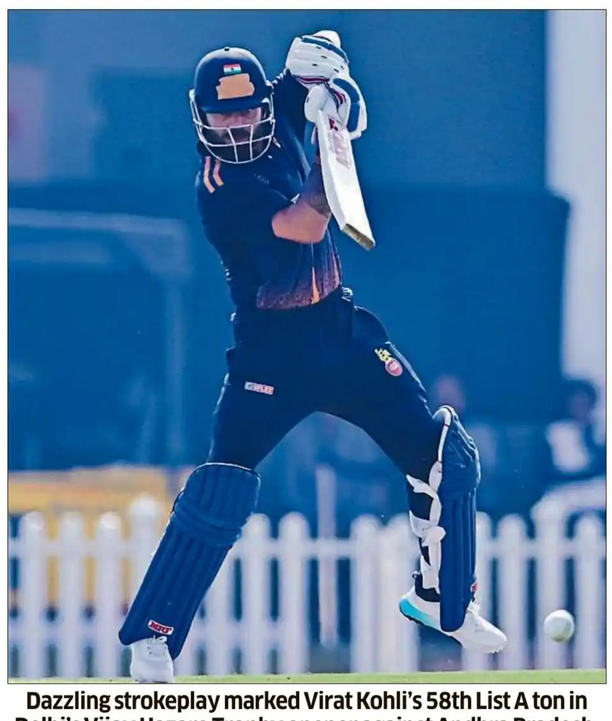
He showed no signs of rust on Wednesday and went past Sachin Tendulkar as the fastest to reach 16,000 runs in List A cricket.

Kohli has been a master of the 50-over format and no newbie to criticism. He would hope to add another special to what has been a brilliant month, in his final game of the year and potentially the tournament.

While Kohli will have his own checklists to tick, Delhi captain Rishabh Pant's lean patch in white-ball cricket has been a valid talking point in recent times.

The 28-year-old wicket-keeper-batter has gone out of national reckoning in the limited-overs format, having failed to find his range. During the game against Andhra, after Kohli had laid the platform, it was an ideal opportunity for Pant to finish the game but walked back with just five next to his name.

The skipper will be keen to put on a good show in the tournament. After the Andhra game, Pant spent a good 30 minutes smashing balls down the ground, evidently working on his range-hitting. And the 28-year-old would hope that his practice turns into performance.



Dazzling strokeplay marked Virat Kohli's 58th List A ton in Delhi's Vijay Hazare Trophy opener against Andhra Pradesh.
DH PHOTO/ PRASHANTH HG

Upbeat Karnataka look to build on great start

Kerala challenge awaits champs in 2nd group match

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
DHNS

Riding a record-breaking performance, Karnataka will hope to replicate their performance against Kerala when the two sides meet for their second Vijay Hazare Trophy Elite Group A fixture at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Friday.

Having endured a humbling Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign, where they won just two games in seven, an embattled Karnataka raised their standards in their tournament opener against an upbeat Jharkhand.

India international Devdutt Padikkal led the batting show with a sublime 118-ball 147, lacing it with 10 fours and seven sixes while skipper Mayank Agarwal also struck a fluent fifty, before an unbeaten 88-run partnership of 41 balls between Abhinav Manohar and debutant Dhruv Prabhakar sealed a brilliant 413-run chase in 47.3 overs.

Karun Nair and Smaran R drew average returns against Jharkhand but Karnataka would be thrilled to have won the game without significant contributions from two of their best batters this Ranji Trophy season.

The 34-year-old Karun, who was the top-scorer in the last edition with 779 runs at a jaw-dropping average of 389.5, can take the attack to any opposition and Kerala will be wary of the same. Young batting sensation Smaran also failed to kick on after a decent start and Karnataka would hope for both middle-order batters to fire in unison.

Back in the drawing room, strategies to improve bowling performance will be running high on head coach Yere Goud's mind as five of the six bowlers leaked at over seven runs an over.

Turning to Kerala, they come into the game on the back of a comfortable 145-run victory over Tripura at the Gujarat College Cricket.

Vishnu Vinod was the star of the show, smashing a 62-ball 102 while opener Rohan Kunnummal scored a 92-ball 94. On the bowling front, Baba Aparajith returned with a five-for to get their campaign off on a rousing note.

However, despite the good start, Kerala could find it hard to stop a confident Karnataka.

Karnataka won their opening group match against Jharkhand with a record run chase. X

Spartons ride on Ashok ton to victory

BENGALURU, DHNS

Ashok D scored 100 as Spartons Sports Club defeated Friends Union Cricketers by five wickets to stormed into the quarter-finals of the KSCA Metro Shield for Group I, IV division league-cum-knockout tournament.

LOCAL CRICKET

In a round-of-16 match, Ashok's ton took Spartons to 203/5 by the 26th over while chasing a target of 200.

Earlier, Katamreddi Sai Tejus (3/28) and Sanjay R (3/44) bowled well to help Spartons skittle Friends Union's innings for 199 in 48.4 overs.

Brief scores: Pre-quarter-finals: Friends Union Cricketers, KGF: 199 all out in 48.4 overs (Arjun KY 42, Shashidhar HS 28, Katamreddi Sai Tejus 3-28, Aditya Singh 2-41, Sanjay R 3-44) lt to Spartons SC: 203/5 in 25.4 overs (Lakshmi Sagar 26, Ashok D 100; Sanath S Nair 2-34, Udaya Shankar D 2-27).
Blue Diamond Cricketers: 209 all out in 40.2 overs (George Fernandis 52, Darshan Patil 31, Sunil Kumar 37; Lohith R 2-58, Raunak Singh 2-41, Benedict Raj Badiger 3-36) bt Vikram CC: 153 all out in 42.2 overs (KA Aayush 38, Benedict Raj Badiger 29, Manav Bhagat 32, Yodhan Hruday GS 4-27, George Fernandis 3-10).
Friends XI CC, Doddaballapura: 132 all out in 39.4 overs (Nirmal S 30; Pavan Gokhale 2-29, Angadraj Sangam Hittalamani 3-12, Shameek Kolambkar 2-16) lt to Sapphire CC: 133/6 in 36.3 overs (Jeevan JV 32, Nitin Bhille 42, Abhinoam Jacob 2-25, Palash Ajay Kanoje 2-35).
Wadiyar CC: 240/8 in 50 overs (Shashank Ganesh 76 n.o., Abhiram V 25, Chirag J 25, Vivekananda MJ 25; R Chandrasekaran 5-61) bt Lions CC: 140 all out in 29.2 overs [Nithin Pandey 35, Neelrattan B 55, Harsha KS 3-20, Abhiram V 4-27, Vivekananda M J 2-23).
YFA SC: 217 all out in 48.2 overs (Hemanth Kumar S 34, Shashank Dubey 34, Adarsh V Hiremath 59, Gangaram 25 n.o., Lakshmi Kanth 2-40, Kishore S 2-40, Karthik Govind Rathod 2-36, Akhil Rao 2-14) lt to Bangalore Star CA: 218/5 in 36.1 overs (Suresh LS 100, Shahid Ali 52, Pavan Kumar 2-33, Sharan K 2-43).
Freelancers CC: 307/9 in 50 overs (Chethan Kumar 57, Santhosh 43, Rakshit Kulkarni 69, Aravind S 69, Gowtham NJ 2-52, Shankara Nayak 2-54) bt Merchants CC (2): 184 all out in 38.2 overs (Bharath Kalachar 81, Milan Dhami 30 n.o., Shivnarayan Sahani 2-40, Santhosh 2-42, Aravind S 4-34).
Merchant CC (1): 172 all out in 40.1 overs (Gnane 78; Pranav R Belur 2-51, Gagan CM 2-12, Rohith KS 3-39) bt Crescent CC (1): 165 all out in 39.3 overs (Nagesh D Nayaka 47, Vasanth Kumar S 31, Subbu Yadav Prasad S 3-16, Sathish S 2-34, Naveen Kumar 2-23).
Victory CC: 215 all out in 49 overs (Prithvi Raj MR 50, Abhiraj S 87, Arnav Ravindra Dere 27, Nihal Patil 4-37, Raghavendra Naik 3-42, Deepak Shridhar 2-49) lt to Sangam CA: 218/6 in 43 overs (Vinay Kumar K 54, Gowrav S 99 n.o., Arnav Dere 2-10).

Ishaanth, Prakul do star turn for Holy Cross School

BENGALURU, DHNS: Ishaanth claimed six wickets while Prakul bagged four wickets as Holy Cross School coasted to a comfortable nine-wicket win over Sri R V School, Kolar in a KSCA under-14 school (Div II) tournament for the B T Ramaiah Shield here.

Ishaanth returned a rich haul of 6/20 while Prakul lent an able hand with 4/6 as RV School were rolled over for a paltry 38 in 17.2 overs.

Holy Cross reached 39/1 in four overs for a comprehensive win.

Brief scores: Sri RV School, Kolar: 38 all out in 17.2 overs (Ishaanth Y 6-20, Prakul 4-6) lt to Holy Cross School: 39/1 in 4 overs.
VSS International Public School: 194 all out in 49.4 overs (Aarnav Karsha 55, Anirudh 54; S Mayank Samrudh 2-31) lt to The Sports School: 195/7 in 35.2 overs (Mayur N 39, Pavandeep R Bharadakane 49, Lakshit Kumar Sipani 47; Aarnav Karsha 2-62, Jeevan KS 2-13).
Jain International Residential School: 69 all out in 21.2 overs (Nishad Birnale 2-13, Daksha G 2-7, Samji Vishnu Sathwik 2-17, Krrish AN 2-2) lt to School of India: 70/1 in 4.3 overs (Hrithvik Shetty 25 n.o., Aaryan Nagesh 29).

Two changes to Cooch Behar squad

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka have made two changes to their Cooch Behar Trophy quarterfinal game against Gujarat to be held in Valsad from January 1-4.

The State Junior selection panel has included Krishav Somasunder and Atharv Malviya in the 15-member team as Rohith AA and Rehan Mohammed go out from Karnataka's previous match.

The squad will be led by Anvay Dravid and he will have no designated deputy unlike in the previous squad where Akshath Prabhakar was named the vice-captain.

Squad: Anvay Dravid (Captain & WK), Aadesh D Urs, Dhruv Krishnan, Manikanth Shivanand, Krishav Somasundar, Atharv Malviya, Varun Patel (WK), Akshath Prabhakar, Rathan BR, Dhyaan Hiremath, Vaibhav Sharma, Eesa Puthige, Virat Ganya, Kuldeep Singh Purohit, Sidharth Akhil. **Coach**: KB Pawan; **Bowling coach**: SL Akshay; **Fielding coach**: C B Karthik; **Manager**: S Babu; **S&C coach**: Samee -Ur-Rahaman; **Physiotherapist**: Anush Bandodkar; **Performance analyst**: Rajeev P.

Karnataka slip with fourth consecutive draw

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka settled for their fourth consecutive draw with a first innings lead as Andhra skipper T Harsha Sai Sathvik and K Bhanu Sri Harsha went on to score big hundreds to see out the final day of their Elite Group D match of the Vijay Merchant Trophy in Bhillai, Chhattisgarh on Wednesday.

Karnataka slipped a place to fourth spot in the six-team group with 12 points from four games and remain in contention for the knockout stages with Madhya Pradesh (20) and Andhra (14) occupying the top two spots with a round to go.

Resuming the final day at 189/2, Andhra innings folded at 409 all out on the final day before both sides called a truce. Andhra captain Sathvik went on to score 223-ball 174 while his overnight partner Harsha belted 133 in a 273-run stand.

Harsha fell to Sukurth J (1/61) with his team just three runs short of the 300-run mark. Skipper Sathvik then kept the scoreboard moving while wickets fell at a quick intervals at the other end as Andhra eventually fell short of Karnataka's first innings total by 64 runs.

Brief scores: Karnataka: (O/n: 262/5): 473/9 decl drew with Andhra: (O/n: 189/2): 409 all out in 132.3 overs (K Bhanu Sri Harsha 133, T Harsha Sai Sathvik 174, Rishi Kumar Reddy 26 n.o.).

Meropi favourite for Army Cup

KOLKATA SELECTIONS

Meropi, trained by Aashay Doctor and to be ridden by Mukesh Kumar, appeals most in the small field of five runners in the fray for the Army Cup which is the feature event of the races to be run over a distance of seven furlongs here on Friday. Races start at 1:00 pm onwards.

1. Romantic Eve Handicap - 1600M: Godsend Divine 1, Cristaldo 2, Carnation 3.
2. Star Team Plate - 1100M: Monumental 1, Rambha 2, Saiko 3.
3. Gen. AS Vaidya Memorial Cup - 2000M: Dusenburg 1, Whirlwind 2, Champagnesupernova 3.
4. Unknown Warrior Cup - 1200M: Morano 1, Abhicandra 2, Light The World 3.
5. Army Cup - 1400M: Meropi 1, Black Eagle 2, Montevedi 3.
6. Twilight Lady Handicap (Div-I) - 1600M: Immortal Beauty 1, Magnifico 2, Brave Majesty 3.
7. Twilight Handicap (Div-II) - 1600M: Black Diamond 1, Cigar Galaxy 2, Paulite Warrior 3.
Day's best: Monumental.
Jackpot: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7. **I Treble:** 2, 3 & 4. **II Treble:** 5, 6 & 7.

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